

Rebates spurring electric vehicles in Valley

The Business Journal, Friday, June 13, 2014

Electric vehicles are seeing a steady adoption in the San Joaquin Valley compared to other regions of the state, a new map shows.

According a new online map by the California Center for Sustainable Energy, more than 63,396 plug-in electric vehicles have been made more affordable through rebates from the state's Clean Vehicle Rebate Project that launched in March 2010.

The program, administered by the CCSE for the California Air Resources Board, offers up to \$2,500 in rebates for the purchase or lease of new, eligible zero-emission and plug-in hybrid light-duty vehicles.

In the San Joaquin Valley, that's on top of a \$3,000 rebate offered by the local air district and a \$7,500 federal tax credit.

Since the state's program began, 1,156 rebates totaling \$2.5 million have been issued for electric vehicles within the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District comprising eight counties from San Joaquin County in the north to Kern County in the south.

That includes 730 rebates for zero-emission vehicles, 412 for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, 10 for zero-emission motorcycles and four for small neighborhood electric vehicles.

Most of the region's rebates have been realized just in the last year. From June 2013 to May 2014, 776 electric vehicle rebates were issued in the Valley compared to 287 the prior year and just 75 the year before that.

Fresno County accounted for 377 rebates since 2010 for a total of \$846,200. Tulare County had 60 rebates for \$138,700 followed by Madera County with 37 rebates for \$84,500 and Kings County with 12 rebates totaling \$26,000.

The San Joaquin Valley beat out most other regions in electric vehicle purchases. In the Mojave Desert, for instance, only 102 rebates have been issued from the Clean Vehicle Rebate Project since March 2010 for a total of \$198,450.

The North Coast region in the north reported 86 rebates for \$168,258 while the Siskiyou region in had just seven rebates for \$13,350.

The largest electric vehicle adoption rates are seen closer to the coast like the Bay Area, where 22,981 rebates have been issued from the Clean Vehicle Rebate Project so far for a total of \$50.06 million.

Shirley Fire grows to 2,200 acres Monday

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, June 16, 2014

The Shirley Fire grew to 2,200 acres by Monday morning, and is only 10 percent contained.

"There was plenty of activity last night. The fire did lay down a little bit," Kern County Fire Department Capt. Sean Collins said at about 8:30 a.m. That, he said let firefighters work on the south and west ends of the fire.

Firefighters worked on the fire along Old State Road overnight. While the area is not yet secure, Collins said firefighters hope to stabilize that area throughout the day.

A total of 1,200 firefighters are battling the wildfire, which has cost some \$4.2 million so far to fight.

Two structures have been destroyed, and one damaged. Collins noted the structures were not inhabited, and might have been old hunting cabins.

With the expected winds today, Collins anticipated that if the fire grows, it would move east toward Wofford Heights and north toward Alta Sierra.

"I'm always mindful about evacuations," Collins said.

The captain noted that in areas of active fire, the roads are very small and firefighters need to bring a lot of equipment to the area. That's why people are urged to leave even for advisory evacuations. If people wait, it could be too late.

Collins said evacuations have been suggested for somewhere between 500 and 1,000 homes, but he didn't have a specific number Monday morning.

A community meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Monday at Faith Community Church at 20 West Panorama Drive in Wofford Heights. Officials from the Sequoia National Forest and the Kern County Fire Department will be there to answer questions and provide the latest information.

Shirley Fire continues growing; 2,000 acres involved

By Steve Levin, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Jun 15, 2014

KERNVILLE -- Pushed by dry winds gusting Sunday to 30 mph, the Shirley Fire more than doubled in size to about 2,000 acres prompting evacuation advisories for residents of Alta Sierra.

Throughout Sunday a convoy of air tankers droned above Kernville on their way to drop retardant on the fire, while families enjoying Fathers Day at Riverside Park played in the Kern River and picnicked.

Nestled among the picnic tables were firefighters from around the state who had worked the overnight shift at the fire and were trying to get some rest.

Downriver at Isabella Lake, a Sikorsky S-64 Air-Crane repeatedly filled its 2,000-gallon tank with water to use against the fire, centered in a steep, hard-to-access area of pine, cedar and brush in the Sequoia National Forest.

Nearly three dozen residents who evacuated Saturday from Pala Ranches, Juniper Highlands, and Old State and Evans roads on Highway 155 spent the night at the Lake Isabella Senior Center.

Kern County Sheriff's deputies also began late Saturday to evacuate several hundred homes in the Wofford Heights area.

Numerous roads in the area remained closed, particularly Rancheria Road from its intersection with Highway 155 to eight miles south at Sawmill Road.

The fire continues to be pushed by a westerly wind. Sunday it was still burning in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage about a mile from Wofford Heights.

According to U.S. Forest Service officials, more than 500 personnel have converged on the area, including a Type 1 team that responds around the country to large or difficult fires.

Bivouaced in the Camp Nine campground, the surge of arriving personnel turned the site into a small city, with tents for sleeping, a mess hall with covered outdoor seating for more than 300 and air-conditioned trailers on either side of what the Forest Service euphemistically calls Main Street.

In addition to Forest Service personnel are Cal Fire teams from Riverside, San Bernadino and Fresno, plus elements of the Kern County Fire and Sheriff's departments, and the federal Bureau of Land Management.

No cause has been determined for the fire, but Forest Service spokeswoman Jennifer Chapman said Sunday "if it isn't lightning that means it's human."

Firefighters are working 12-hour shifts, and Sunday a "swing" shift was started to keep pressure on the fire, which has created heavy smoke all around the Kern River Valley.

"Access is very difficult," said Cal Fire Captain Chuck Ybarra of Riverside. He and some of the 18 other Cal Fire Riverside firefighters had worked overnight Saturday starting backfires to protect homes in the fire's path.

Sunday afternoon they were lounging in the shade at Riverside Park before reporting back to Camp 9 for a 6 p.m. briefing. Ybarra said it takes 45-minutes to reach the fire from Camp 9.

Residents with health problems are advised to stay indoors Monday.

A community meeting about the fire will take place at 7 p.m. Monday at Faith Community Church, 20 West Panorma Drive in Wofford Heights. Sequoia National Forest and Kern County Fire Department representatives will be there.

The majority of recreational activities in the Kern River Ranger District and vicinity are unaffected by the fire.

California fire grows slightly, threatens homes

Associated Press

The Hanford Sentinel, The Porterville Recorder, Monday, June 16, 2014

LAKE ISABELLA, Calif. — A destructive wildfire burning near homes Monday in the southern Sierra Nevada west of California's Lake Isabella grew only slightly overnight and crews expected to make significant progress before hotter, drier weather sets in later in the week.

Firefighters using air tankers and helicopters were battling the blaze, which has charred about 3.4 square miles of trees and brush in and around the Sequoia National Forest.

Flames came within a mile of the community of Wofford Heights and authorities called on residents of about a thousand threatened homes to evacuate.

The Shirley Fire has destroyed at least two structures, fire spokesman Jay Nichols said.

The blaze was 10 percent contained, but officials say that number is expected to grow throughout the day, KGET-TV reported (<http://on.fb.me/1vsUJzL>).

The fire broke out Friday night in remote area about 40 miles northeast of Bakersfield and exploded late Saturday as dry winds pushed the flames toward homes, prompting Kern County Sheriff's deputies to knock on doors into the night to urge residents to leave.

More than 1,100 firefighters were battling the blaze in steep, rugged terrain. Aircraft were scooping water from Lake Isabella to use against the flames.

More crews were expected to join the fight. Authorities planned to keep the augmented crews working through a "swing shift" so they don't lose any time during shift changes to make progress, Forest Service spokeswoman Jennifer Chapman said.

"Our current outlook for the forecast is such that we are really ramping up suppression operations over the next couple of days because it's going to be even hotter and drier at the end of the week," she said.

The Forest Service said that camping, horseback riding, rafting and other activities in the Sequoia district were so far unaffected by the blaze.

Kern County wildfire threatening 500 homes

Associated Press

Manteca Bulletin, Sunday, June 15, 2014

BAKERSFIELD — Federal fire officials accelerated their attack Sunday on a smoky wildfire that threatened 500 homes in Central California as they raced to control the fast-moving blaze before hotter, drier weather sets in, a U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman said.

The fire burning in and around the Sequoia National Forest doubled in size overnight and came within a mile of a community about 30 miles northeast of Bakersfield where sheriff's deputies walked the streets with bullhorns and knocked on doors as they urged residents to evacuate, authorities said.

"They were out there walking the streets through the night," Forest Service spokeswoman Cindy Thill said. "I just got off the phone with someone who said the sheriffs got to them at 2 this morning."

The Forest Service reported that the Shirley Fire had consumed more than 2.8 square miles of trees, grass and chaparral located on federal, state, local and private lands as of Sunday morning. The blaze,

first reported Friday night, was 10 percent contained.
The cause is under investigation.

The 500 homes where people were being strongly urged to leave are located in Wofford Heights, an area sandwiched between the fire and Lake Isabella, a popular recreation spot.

About 560 personnel were working on the ground and from the air to contain the fire on Saturday night, but more were expected to join the fight on Sunday.

Tulare County firefighters battle Kern County blaze

Staff Report/Associated Press

Visalia Times-Delta, Sunday, June 15, 2014

The Tulare County Fire Department and other local fire departments sent firefighters to Kern County on Sunday evening to help battle a wildfire there.

According to the Associated Press, the Shirley Fire threatened 500 homes on Sunday in the Wofford Heights area near Lake Isabella at the south end of the Sequoia National Forest. People were strongly urged to leave the area, according to the AP.

Tulare County Fire's Joe Rosa said that three engines from TCFD were part of two five-engine strike teams from the area sent to battle the blaze.

Rosa said that firefighters are allowed to remain on site a maximum of 14 days before swapping out with new crews.

According to the Associated Press, the fire was first reported on Friday and was 10 percent contained as of Sunday night.

U.S. Forest Service officials reported to the AP that the fire had consumed more than 2.8 square miles as of Sunday morning.

Forest Service spokeswoman Jennifer Chapman told the AP that about 560 personnel were on the ground and in the air fighting to contain the fire on Saturday night. More fire personnel were expected to arrive on Sunday, she told the AP.

"Our current outlook for the forecast is such that we are really ramping up suppression operations over the next couple of days because it's going to be even hotter and dryer at the end of the week," she told the AP.

[Bakersfield Californian Column, Saturday, Jun 14, 2014:](#)

Lois Henry: Study 'breath of fresh' air on asthma-air pollution link

I'm sure a recent study looking at asthma and fine particulate matter in the San Joaquin Valley will go over like a lead balloon for some.

What it found was even as fine particulate matter (tiny bits of dust and soot also called PM2.5) dropped significantly in the years 2008-2010, asthma-related ER visits went up.

What that means, as far as asthma goes, is air pollution isn't a major contributing factor.

It's well known that air pollution doesn't cause asthma, but the mantra has long been it's likely a trigger for asthma attacks.

Well, probably not, according to this study, commissioned by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and scheduled to be presented at the district's June 19 board meeting.

"It shows that, relative to other causes, air pollution doesn't even register" as a trigger for asthma attacks, said Seyed Sadredin, director of the air district.

The study also broke down the constituents that make up PM2.5 to ferret out which bits do the most harm.

It found that to the minimal extent PM2.5 does affect asthma, the main culprits are wood smoke and vehicle emissions. Ammonium nitrates had zero effect. That's important for dairy farmers, but we'll come back to that.

This study is an extension of a previous study released in 2011 that looked at asthma-related ER visits and PM2.5 levels during the years 2005-2007.

That study did find a strong correlation between high PM2.5 levels and hospital visits for asthma, particularly among children.

But in this latest study, the correlation shifted dramatically away from PM2.5 levels, instead showing a strong association between asthma attacks and upper respiratory infections -- colds.

In a summary describing the study, the air district states this latest study is "a reminder of the complexity of factors and processes that shape public health outcomes in the San Joaquin Valley, particularly in respect to asthma."

Hmm.

No such caution was included in the previous study that did show a correlation between PM2.5 and asthma ER visits.

Back then the study's findings were "important new regional evidence for the public health consequences of air pollution" and were loudly touted by activists as justification for ever more regulation.

Which is why I'm sure the new findings will be roundly booed by activists who get a lot of political mileage on the back of childhood asthma, something that pulls at all our heartstrings.

This study pours cold water on that emotional reaction.

"The other important finding was that ammonium nitrates, which are tied to dairy emissions, don't have any impact on asthma attacks," Sadredin said.

Fifty percent to 70 percent of PM2.5 pollution in the valley is caused by ammonium nitrates, Sadredin said.

If you hate mega dairies, that's a big, fat slow moving target.

But if it turns out all that ammonium nitrate isn't actually hurting anyone, why bother with it?

Sadredin said the district will use the results of this study to lay the foundation for a more risk-based approach to cutting air pollution.

The air district has been pressing the EPA for some time to allow it to regulate for different constituents within air pollution rather than regulating based on mass.

"The Clean Air Act treats all species (constituents) the same," he said. Whether they're carcinogenic or inert, it doesn't matter.

"It's a shotgun approach."

He said in mature air districts like the valley, where we've been at emission reduction for many years and have, in fact, cut pollution by up to 80 percent, the EPA should allow a more surgical approach so regulators can concentrate on those pollutants that are most dangerous.

For instance, with ozone, which is made up of VOCs and NOx (volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides), our big problem is NOx.

In order to meet the EPA's new eight-hour rule for ozone, the air district has proposed allowing us extra credit for every ton of NOx we cut, rather than forcing equal cuts to VOC, which does nothing to improve public health.

Same thing with PM2.5.

"If asthma is the public health issue and ammonium nitrates don't contribute to the problem but wood smoke does, let us target that rather than engaging in a gazillion-dollar effort to go after nitrates," Sadredin said.

I ran the air district's study by another scientist in the air biz, Robert Phalen, a professor of medicine at UC Irvine and founder and co-director of the Air Pollution Health Effects Lab at Irvine.

"It's a breath of fresh air," he said, without a hint of irony.

Regulators need to better understand the pollutants they're trying to reduce. They need to analyze the public health risks of those reductions as well, he said.

"That's a fundamental problem we have with regulators worldwide," he said. "They look at something in isolation and try to drive the risk of that one factor to zero not realizing that in doing that, they may be causing more harm to public health."

Much like microbiologists have shown that being too clean can be bad for our health, he said, pollutant free air can have adverse effects as well.

For instance, if a person's respiratory tract is never challenged, particularly at a young age, it won't develop the defense mechanisms needed to survive, he explained.

Our air is exceptionally clean today compared with the past, Phalen noted.

At some point the question needs to be asked, "How clean is clean enough?"

I'm pretty sure that's a question no bureaucrat who makes a living off dreaming up more air regulations will ever answer.