

It's heat and mist

People and pigs alike seek respite from high temperatures.

By Felicia Cousart Matlosz / The Fresno Bee

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While people in cities such as Madera and Visalia can expect slight relief today from temperatures at the century mark, Fresnoans won't get a break.

The forecast high for Fresno today is 100 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. In Madera, the mercury should drop to 96 from Thursday's 101. Visalia should register a 95, down from Thursday's 102.

Temperatures in Fresno should hover right at 100 or just above the triple-digit figure for about a week, said Jim Bagnall, a meteorologist in the National Weather Service's Hanford office. Thursday's mark in Fresno was 103.

"It's hot, and it's staying hot," he said.

Coalinga recorded the highest mark Thursday in the central San Joaquin Valley at 106. The western Fresno County city should be the hot spot again today, with a projected temperature of 102 degrees.

Air quality in the Central Valley will be unhealthy today in Fresno and Tulare counties for people whose physical conditions make them sensitive to ozone. Conditions will be moderate in Madera, Merced and Kings counties.

Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District hope people reduce their use of gas-powered vehicles and machines, which contribute to airborne emissions.

For example, a gas-powered lawn mower running for an hour produces the same amount of emissions as 40 late-model cars, according to Janelle Schneider, spokeswoman for the air pollution control district.

Though the weather is uncomfortable, the temperatures in Fresno are nowhere near record-setting. The chart-buster for July 28 was 110. The record for July 29 is 113.

Fashion Fair is one of the indoor malls that sees a spike in the number of visitors during the summer.

"It happens every year," said Kristie LaMarsh, the mall's marketing manager.

Senior citizens walk the indoor mall for exercise before stores open in the morning. Other people make the mall a priority because they can visit several shops and stay out of the heat.

"They're looking for indoor activity and they're not going to get a sunstroke walking through the mall," LaMarsh said.

Even though the weather remains hot, the pigs in the swine unit at California State University, Fresno are staying cool through the use of water misters and fans.

Last October, excess heat killed 72 pigs in the swine's nursery because a power failure shut down ventilation that helped keep their skin cool. The nursery's sensor normally set off an alarm when temperatures rose too high, but the sensor didn't work because of the outage.

The university announced it would take several measures to help prevent future mishaps, including the installation of an alarm system, powered by a telephone system, that would alert campus police of power failures.

On Thursday, hundreds of pigs were being kept comfortable. Sows and gilts (young female pigs) had just given birth to piglets or were about to do so. Younger pigs were eating feed and playing in their pens. Other pigs were lolling about in mud to ward off the heat.

Esther Henson, an animal science major who helps watch over the unit, said they check the misters and fans each day. They also watch the herd regularly and, if needed, move pigs early in the morning or at night.

Henson said one sign that a pig is comfortable is that it's eating normally. Another sign is the tail.

"They're waving their tails around," said Henson, who plans to focus on swine production management. "That's usually a sign they're happy."

S.J. serious about busting dust

Air pollution district officials propose \$300 fee for builders

Dana Nichols, Record Staff Writer

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The war on dust is about to get more expensive.

San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution District officials are proposing to charge builders a dust fee on virtually all large construction projects.

The money would pay staff needed to inspect construction sites and fine violators who allow too much dust to be kicked up by bulldozers, backhoes and trucks. The \$300 fee would also pay for staff time to review the dust-control plans already required for many construction projects.

Air district officials say the crackdown is needed to clear dust from Valley air and comply with state and federal air standards before a 2010 deadline.

The San Joaquin Valley violates both state and federal standards for what air pollution cops call PM 10, or particulate matter 10 microns wide or smaller. That means the particles are one-seventh the diameter of a human hair or smaller. Such tiny particles, including smoke, diesel exhaust and dust, can lodge deeply in human lungs, contributing to heart attacks, lung diseases and early deaths.

Still, builders say the proposed dust fee is unnecessary and that they're already required to control dust.

Michael Prandini, chief executive of the Building Industry Association of the San Joaquin Valley, said during an air district workshop Thursday that it is a waste of time and money to conduct both a detailed review of dust plans and site inspections.

The law already requires builders to control their dust one way or another. That includes using water trucks to wet roads and keep dust down.

"It shouldn't make any difference to you whether builders use a tanker or a squirt gun," Prandini said.

Ted Strauss, supervising air quality inspector for the district, said the plans do matter. His staff often catches problems with the plans, such as contractors who won't have enough water sources to wet down their roads.

"We still find a lot of contractors who are unfamiliar with our regulations," Strauss said.

Prandini said his association wants to see the fee reduced to pay for site inspections only.

The new rule will apply only to construction sites where more than 10 acres of dirt is disturbed, in the case of homes, or more than 5 acres for other kinds of construction.

Still that adds up to about 1,200 projects a year in the region stretching from Bakersfield to Lodi.

The fee will raise more than \$360,000 a year.

John Beckman, director of governmental affairs for the Stockton-based Building Industry Association of the Delta, said his industry wants to do its part to control air pollution.

But Beckman, who is also mayor of Lodi, said the district should simply inspect and fine violators rather than creating new fees and dust-plan requirements.

"The air district should probably adopt one of two approaches and not try to adopt both," Beckman said.

Air district staff will accept comments on the proposed fees before sending a final version of the new fee for approval by the district board before the end of the year.

Farmers Struggle With EPA Air Program

By Alan Scher Zagir, Associated Press Writer

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Mexico, Mo. (AP) -- Hog farmer Bill Kessler hopes a voluntary federal program for monitoring livestock emissions will keep his 500-sow operation out of court for a few years.

For \$200, Kessler has essentially bought four years of amnesty from air-pollution penalties while the federal Environmental Protection Agency determines appropriate air quality standards for farm operations.

Technically, it's an upfront penalty. Kessler calls it "an insurance policy."

EPA officials had hoped to enlist thousands of hog, poultry, egg and dairy farmers when they announced the program in January. As of July 20, however, only 832 businesses signed on, said Bob Kaplan, an attorney in the EPA's enforcement office.

The program's success requires a range of participants, from factory farms to contract growers, to be monitored for ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and other potentially harmful airborne emissions.

The four-year program will help officials determine emissions levels for different types of farms before they crack down on emissions such as ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, volatile organic compounds and dust.

In the meantime, farmers who participate in the program pay a one-time penalty based on the type of farming operation, plus \$2,500 toward monitoring costs.

Even with the promise of four years of legal amnesty, the incentive to participate is difficult to determine, said Morrill Harriman, executive vice president of the Poultry Federation of Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

"You are signing an agreement that says, 'I am not violating any air quality laws. Here, I'm going to pay you to see if I'm violating any air quality laws,'" he said. "It's extremely difficult to explain to people."

Critics say the low participation points to the program's fundamental flaw: Federal law regulating clean air, hazardous waste and emergency reporting systems already provide the EPA with the authority to hold agriculture accountable for air emissions.

"The deal may ultimately collapse under its own weight for lack of participation," said Michelle Merkel, a former EPA enforcement attorney who now works for the Washington-based Environmental Integrity Group.

Southwest Missouri dairy farmer Larry Purdon calls the program a confusing mess.

"Most of us don't know what the rules are," said Purdon, who milks 100 cows on his farm near the Arkansas border. "We've got small little operations on the pasture. We don't feel like there's an air emission problem."

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Friday, July 29, 2005:](#)

Tehachapi windmills kill fewer birds than other sites

By DICK ANDERSON

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area near Livermore and birds. A description of the Tehachapi Pass WRA and birds with comparisons to Altamont Pass and San Geronio Pass is interesting.

All three of these WRAs have large wind energy developments and produce important amounts of electricity.

As the nation strives for a more diversified energy mix and less dependency on oil, wind energy has attracted attention as an increasingly economical means of generating electricity. Wind energy's ability to generate electricity without many of the environmental impacts associated with other energy sources -- air and water pollution, mercury emissions, and greenhouse gases associated with climate change -- can benefit the global environment.

Other land use options may have more impact on landscapes and ecosystems. However, the direct and indirect local and cumulative impacts of wind plants on birds continues to be an issue.

Wind turbines can kill birds. There is great variation in the number of birds being killed in the various wind energy developments that have been studied. All birds were included in the studies, but compared with other species studied, raptors -- hawks, golden eagles, falcons and owls -- appear to be at higher risk relative to their occurrence for collisions with wind turbines. The reason for this is not fully understood.

Most recent fatality estimates reported for wind projects are based on extrapolations of the number of fatalities with the estimates corrected for observer detection, scavenging, and other sampling biases. The larger the correction factors, the higher the uncertainty in the estimates.

Studies conducted several years ago at Tehachapi Pass and San Gorgonio Pass are the most comprehensive fatality and use studies conducted at those sites to date. Those studies show that raptor use at Tehachapi Pass is estimated to be 10 percent of the raptor use at Altamont Pass. Raptor use at San Gorgonio is estimated to be about 5 percent of the raptor use at Altamont Pass.

However, the Tehachapi and San Gorgonio studies did not attempt to estimate annual bird fatality due to the extremely high uncertainty surrounding the long search intervals and the unknown effect of scavenging rates.

Studies at sites across the country have reported highly variable estimates of carcass removal, from very low scavenging rates, to extremely high scavenging rates. This clouds the numbers a bit due to the inherent differences between sites.

However, under the assumption of similar scavenging rates, fatality rates at the Altamont Pass are estimated to be 1+ raptor per megawatt per year, a little less than 0.20 per megawatt per year for Tehachapi Pass, and less than 0.10 per megawatt per year for San Gorgonio Pass WRA.

To some this is still too many raptor deaths. I think most folks agree that minimizing bird fatalities whenever there is an opportunity is important.

Overall, Tehachapi Pass has many fewer raptors using the area than in Altamont Pass and it follows that there are many fewer raptor deaths due to collision at Tehachapi Pass.

Dick Anderson of Davis is a wildlife ecologist and was the project manager for studies conducted at Tehachapi Pass and San Gorgonio Pass Wind Resource Areas for the California Energy Commission