

## **Developers will have to pay new fee on projects to reduce air pollution**

By San Joaquin News Service

Lodi News Sentinel, Monday, December 19, 2005

Beginning in March, developers of all residential, commercial and industrial projects will pay a fee to support air pollution reduction efforts in the valley.

The new rule, passed by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Governing Board last week, is based on the estimated pollution that comes from cars, trucks and use of fuels to heat and cool the new buildings. The district also factors in landscape maintenance and construction as polluters.

District engineers expect to eliminate about 10.5 tons per day more in nitrogen oxides and particulate matter in the air by 2010.

The California Air Resources Board figures that the San Joaquin Valley produces about 492.3 tons per day of nitrogen oxides and 622.3 tons of particulate matter. These are the chemicals that combine in the air to produce smog.

About 41 percent of the nitrogen oxides come from cars and trucks. Nearly 92 percent of the particulate matter comes from area-wide sources. That category includes mostly dust from farms and roads but also includes dust from construction and smoke from indoor and outdoor fires.

The rule is also an incentive for developers and city planners to work toward higher-density developments, such as more homes per-acre or apartments and mixing shopping centers in with homes to reduce the need for automobile traffic.

The district will charge a fee to any developer who doesn't demonstrate substantial pollution reduction efforts. A formula will be used to calculate fees. For example, a developer would pay \$780 for each house in a 120-home subdivision on 24 acres if no effort is made to reduce pollution. But fees could be reduced for some pollution reduction efforts, like eliminating wood stoves, increasing energy efficiency and building high-density projects within a subdivision.

Building industry representatives and some cities opposed the rule as yet another restriction and fee that will increase the cost of new homes in the San Joaquin Valley.

John Beckman, government relations representative for the Building Industry Association of the Delta, said developers who try to comply with the rules will likely still pay fees, but would have to chase after the discounts.

"In a way, they're socially engineering development to make it look the way they want it to look," he said.

The rule takes effect in March and will apply to subdivisions of more than 50 homes, commercial projects of more than 2,000 square feet, government offices of more 10,000 square feet, medical offices of more than 20,000 square feet, schools or industrial buildings of more than 25,000 square feet, and office buildings of more than 50,000 square feet.

### **Developer fee passed by Governing Board**

Press staff report

Tracy Press, Monday, December 19, 2005

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### **Proposal shrouds toxic emissions EPA plan would change reporting requirements**

Hank Shaw, Capitol Bureau Chief  
Stockton Record, Sunday, December 18, 2005

SACRAMENTO -- A new federal proposal would let thousands of companies dump toxins such as lead and mercury into the air and water without reporting any details of it.

Federal data show at least 14 of those companies are in the Central Valley, and seven are in San Joaquin County.

That's only about 2 percent of the waste emitted by Central Valley industries every year, but it is enough to concern several state agencies that use the data -- and deeply alarm the environmental community.

The proposal would mean about 1 million pounds of waste a year would no longer be tracked in California.

Called the Toxics Release Inventory, the federal database is among the most complete libraries of the amount and nature of toxic substances released by industries in the normal course of business.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency wants to weaken the reporting requirements to

ease the paperwork burden on businesses that emit very few toxins -- such as Stockton's Sierra Chemical Corp., which reported no emissions in 2003.

Under the proposal, the threshold for filing detailed reports will increase from 500 pounds of waste a year to 5,000 pounds. A related proposal would slow reporting from every year to every other year.

Hundreds of low-emitting businesses are forced to file lengthy reports annually that are expensive to produce, all for data that is of little use to researchers or state governments, supporters of the proposal say.

"Today's proposal would provide burden reduction for approximately one-third of TRI reporters while still requiring facilities to report on all chemicals that they report on today," EPA spokeswoman Kimberly Nelson said.

Low-emitting firms would still report what kind of toxins they release, just not how much.

Reporting requirements kick in based on how much of a toxin a company possesses on site rather than what's released. Some firms use all of their hazardous materials in production and release nothing.

The federal Office of Management and Budget estimates it requires about 47 hours to complete the long-form report. National Federation of Independent Businesses lobbyist Andrew Langer says hiring consultants to do this can cost a business thousands of dollars.

"That's a big, big burden and a lot of money for a small-business owner," Langer said.

Locally, Sierra Chemical Corp., the Dana Corp. (Toyota truck parts) and Duraflame (fire logs) released nothing into the environment in 2003, the last year for which data is available.

Slightly larger businesses, such as Tracy's Ameron Pipe Group -- which released 1,050 pounds of manganese and nickel in 2003 -- may have less of a problem reporting.

"I don't think reporting the requirements as they exist now is a significant burden" beyond the first year, said Ameron's Miles Culhane. They're all tracked by a computer program, he said. "You have a computer system, and you're simply updating what you do.

"As somebody in the industry, ... I find most of the complaints about the significant costs associated with reporting specious and without significant merit," Culhane said.

Environmentalists are upset with the idea. They point to the litany of pro-business moves by the Republican-controlled Congress and President Bush's administration and say this is part of a larger plan.

"The EPA wants to help corporations hide toxic pollution," said Sean Moulton of the Washington, D.C.-based watchdog group OMB Watch. "TRI is supposed to be about protecting and informing communities. These proposals put companies first and communities last."

One area in Fresno and several neighborhoods in the Bay Area communities of Pittsburg, San Leandro and Richmond fall into this category.

Stockton's California Spray Dry Co. also would get off the hook. This is an animal-rendering plant whose parent company, Modesto Tallow, has been fined at least \$1.4 million by various state regulatory agencies for air and water violations. The Stockton plant has been cited for 15 violations by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

California Spray Dry Co. released 3,867 pounds of ammonia into the environment in 2003, according to the federal data. Officials from California Spray Dry did not return several calls for comment, but they have said they are trying to be a good neighbor to the residential area that surrounds the plant.

State agencies use the federal data to help them measure the amount of pollution in California, which is especially critical in the Central Valley, given its air and water woes.

"We use the data almost like a tracking system," said Ron Baker of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control. "It's a pretty good estimate of how we can be doing to reduce contaminants released into the environment."

Baker said the California EPA expects to comment on its federal counterpart's proposal. Comments are due by Jan. 13.

A change in the threshold of reporting could take effect in early 2006, but slowing the reporting requirements to every other year could not take effect until late 2006 at the earliest.

A group of six U.S. senators -- including Barbara Boxer of California -- wrote EPA chief Stephen Johnson to protest the proposal, especially as it concerns "persistent bioaccumulative toxins" such as mercury.

"The rest of the world is making steady progress towards better control of their PBT releases," the senators wrote. "We are unaware of any compelling reason that the United States should reduce the public's information about the most dangerous class of industrial chemicals."

## **Businesses hope raceway creates more customers**

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun-Star

Sunday, December 19, 2005

ATWATER -- William Decker isn't a NASCAR fan, but he's really hoping that the proposed Riverside Motorsports Park gets built. In fact, he's counting on it.

Decker owns Big Will's Smoke-'n-BBQ on Bellevue Road.

He says he's so sure that the proposed 1,200-acre raceway will bring in desperately needed business that he moved his restaurant from sleepy downtown Atwater out to Bellevue Road to be closer to the raceway site.

"I think most of the restaurants, and Atwater in general, will benefit greatly from the track," said Decker. "There's so many racetrack enthusiasts. It will be like Disneyland for them. Some people won't want to pay park prices for food, so they'll go outside the park."

Decker says he's watched with concern as hundreds of new houses have sprouted up in the area.

The new housing is out of his price range, and it doesn't do a lot for his business.

"The people moving into these houses, you won't see their money in the restaurant, because they're commuting to Fresno and San Jose," said Decker.

The race fans who visit Riverside Motorsports Park, says Decker, will stick around for days, hopefully finding time to drive into Atwater and eat St. Louis pork ribs at his restaurant.

He's also heard that the racetrack could bring in as many as 20,000 jobs.

"I think that's a high estimate, but anything over 1,000 is more than welcome," said Decker.

Racetrack backers say the track could bring in from 150 to 4,000 jobs.

Right now, Decker says, too many people in Atwater are on public assistance to eat out much.

He knows some people oppose the raceway because they think it could increase air pollution and traffic congestion, but to Decker, the pros outweigh the cons.

"The jobs, the income, the people -- those benefits outweigh the problems immensely," said Decker. "The problems can be worked out, but the poverty can't. There's nothing here to look forward to. Most young people talk about getting their degrees and then getting out because there's nothing here for them."

Candice Adam-Medefind, a member of Citizens Against the Raceway, worries about the future, too.

She worries that the proposed raceway will clog roads with thousands of cars that will worsen the Valley's already poor air quality.

Speaking of business owners who want the raceway to come to town, she said, "I would ask them if they have children or grandchildren that will be growing up in the Valley.

"Scientists are estimating that any child growing up in the Valley today, as air quality stands right now, is destined to have some level of diminished lung capacity. I'm not sure that any amount of business or money is worth that trade-off. I understand the economic arguments, but we need to think long-term," said Adam-Medefind.

Riverside Motorsports Park CEO John Condren sees the raceway as an economic engine that can also improve air quality.

Race fans at other tracks spend an average of \$300 per person per day outside the track, according to Condren.

Plus, the jobs that the raceway could create will keep residents in the area instead of commuting to the Bay Area for work.

"You've got 150,000 cars leaving the Valley every day because they work in the Bay Area," said Condren. "If we can employ 4,000 people at the park, that's 4,000 less cars that are making that drive."

To Condren, that means the RMP could actually improve the economy and air quality at the same time.

"We can't solve the problem, but we can be part of the solution," said Condren.

But the raceway is still in the planning stage, and the Merced County Board of Supervisors must approve the project before it can go any further. That won't happen until Spring 2006 at the earliest.

So William Decker will have to wait a while for those new restaurant customers, if they ever come at all.

If the Riverside Motorsports Park doesn't get built, Decker says he'll think about moving his restaurant far away from Atwater.

"If the area doesn't improve business-wise, New Orleans is looking better," said Decker. "There's tax breaks there, and with the tourism and the cash flow, we could make ten times as much money."

### **The week in review**

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, December 18, 2005

If you missed your Californian this past week, you missed a lot of news. Here's a summary of the breaking news, noteworthy events and relevant trends -- along with the occasional oddity -- from the last six days.

For details on these and other recent stories, visit [bakersfield.com](http://bakersfield.com).

### **Firefighters burn for training**

What happened: The valley air district's fireplace restrictions don't apply to the Kern County Fire Department. That was made clear Wednesday, when TV news broadcast the department burning down a house in Lamont to train employees. Because of air quality concerns, viewers hadn't been able to burn wood in their fireplaces since the previous Friday.

What's next: Thanksgiving was a no-burn day, and without a storm, residents won't be able to use their fireplaces on Christmas. Not so much as a wind event is forecast before the holiday.

### **Builders can't pollute the air**

What happened: On Thursday, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board became the first in the nation to regulate builders for air pollution. Residential and commercial builders must reduce smog-forming nitrogen oxides and particulate pollution from their projects, or pay one-time fees to the district.

What's next: If home builders don't design air-friendly subdivisions, their fees could exceed \$1,700-per-house by 2008. The new rule will bring in \$103 million in the first three years, according to district figures. The district will spend all the money on emissions reductions, and most of it will help pave unpaved roads and replace dirty engines.

### **Residents sue nearby dairy**

What happened: The Vanderham Dairy under construction south of Shafter is modestly sized, by recent standards -- just 1,320 milk cows. But that's not small enough to avoid an environmental lawsuit.

The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment filed suit Thursday in federal district court in Fresno on behalf of the citizens group Association of Irrigated Residents. The suit alleges the dairy is being built without necessary permits from the valley air district and without necessary pollution controls.

The district says the dairy isn't big enough to need the air permit and pollution equipment.

What's next: The environmental center's lawyers say federal rules trump state requirements, so they'll pursue the case on those lines. A dairy industry spokesman said the Vanderhams have complied with all regulations.

### **County considers dairy rules**

What happened: County supervisors came close to OK'ing a new program requiring annual inspections of dairies, feedlots and other livestock operations. Facilities would pay \$150 a year, which is expected to cover staff costs for the inspections.

What's next: Because supervisors wanted some details changed, they postponed a final decision until Tuesday. The program looks likely to pass.

### **Group protests sludge station**

What happened: An apparently illegal sludge-and-manure transfer station outside Arvin spurred a complaint from a Canadian anti-sludge activist. The site, on the west side of Edison Road about a half-mile north of Herring Road, has been used as a drop-off point for Southern California compost by a subsidiary of Synagro Technologies, Inc.

Material from the Inland Empire Utility Agency is stored there, then taken by other trucks to Fresno and Madera counties, according to Synagro, which also says the site will be cleared in a couple weeks.

What's next: The complaint is being bounced from county environmental health offices to the code compliance unit.

### **Kern air not factory-soiled**

What happened: We might be smoggy, but Kern County is among the least affected by toxic air pollution from factories, according to a report from the Associated Press. Here, the health risk from toxic industrial air pollution is a third of the national median.

### **AP: Towns With Unhealthy Air Fight Back**

By David Pace, Associated Press Writer

in the L.A. Times, Friday, December 16, 2005

Camden, N.J. (AP) -- The stench from the sewage treatment plant behind her home is not as bad as it once was, before community protests and a citizens' lawsuit forced the county to spend millions of dollars to reduce the odors.

But still, Lula Williams says, open the front door some days and, "Lord have mercy, you just can't breathe."

For 23 years, Williams has lived in front of that facility, around the corner from a licorice mulch plant, down the street from three scrap metal recyclers and within a few hundred yards of a radiation-contaminated Superfund site that languished for two decades before authorities cleaned it up.

Since the early 1990s, she also has seen the county's trash-to-steam incinerator move into her neighborhood, as well as a new fossil-fuel-burning power plant and a recycling facility. But when the St. Lawrence Cement Co. began building its new plant down the street a few years ago, the 74-year-old Williams decided it was time to start fighting back.

"This is a poor, black neighborhood, Hispanic and white," she said. "No other city or state that you go to would you find all this in it where residents live. You understand what I'm saying?"

Williams' plight, like that of many people trapped in dirty factory air, illustrates how difficult it is to free neighborhoods from the legacy of industrial pollution, an Associated Press review found.

Williams is now president of South Camden Citizens in Action, a group that has waged a five-year legal battle against the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for allowing the giant cement-grinding plant into their neighborhood.

The uphill battle mirrors others in the country:

\_In Ponca City, Okla., the Ponca Indian Tribe this year sued Continental Carbon Co., alleging that air pollution from its plant is endangering children and the elderly. The company denies the allegations. The city also has sued Continental, contending that emissions have left the town covered with black soot.

\_In suburban Detroit, the cities of Ecorse and River Rouge have filed suits against U.S. Steel Corp., alleging pollution from one of the company's plants is harming the health of residents and eroding real estate values. A U.S. Steel spokesman says the company has spent millions to correct environmental problems it inherited when it took over the bankrupt plant in 2003.

\_In Madison, Wis., an environmental group has fought for more than a year to overturn a state decision permitting a foundry to increase by fivefold the particle emissions from its metal fabricating processes. An administrative law judge ruled this fall the increase did not violate state air quality standards, but ordered additional monitoring.

Williams lives in Waterfront South, the most polluted neighborhood in Camden, a former industrial center that's home to more than 100 contaminated sites. Abandoned and operating smokestacks dot the city's landscape, spewing out pollutants that force residents to breathe some of the unhealthiest air in the country.

The AP's analysis of government data found that seven Camden neighborhoods rank among the top 1 percent in the nation in the long-term health risk posed by industrial air pollution. All seven are mostly black and Hispanic.

Melvin R. "Randy" Primas, a former mayor who is now the city's chief operating officer, says Camden residents cannot open their windows in the summer because of the odors. "That is why we offered free indoor air filters to all the residents," he said.

Primas, who was mayor when the county's trash-to-steam generator was built in Waterfront South, said local officials are doing all they can to protect residents' health and to revitalize the area without bringing in new pollution.

But he said that Waterfront South residents must understand that "the neighborhood that they are living in is the industrial corridor for Camden. If you look at what has been there for 100 years, it's major industry."

In the past five years, the state Department of Environmental Protection has issued more than 700 air emission permits in Camden, ranging from school boilers to a metal alloy manufacturer that annually emits hundreds of pounds of chromium, a cancer-causing metal.

"The DEP has had no qualms about continuing to issue air permits for every facility in Waterfront South, without ever considering whether there is already such a high concentration of industry that it's not safe to put more in," said Olga Pomar, the legal services lawyer who filed the suit over the cement plant.

DEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell said his agency has not issued any emission permits for major new facilities in Waterfront South since 2002. "We've recognized the long-standing environmental neglect of Camden, particularly the Waterfront South area," he said.

Campbell said the agency also has stepped up environmental enforcement and is developing a plan to mitigate the impact of pollution.

In the legal battle over the cement plant, residents won a victory in 2001 when a federal judge ruled they had been victims of racial discrimination. But legal setbacks followed and they now must prove — if the case goes to trial — that the state intentionally discriminated against them. "It's a very hard standard," Pomar said.

Still, their suit over the sewage treatment plant produced a settlement in 1998 and \$5 million in odor controls. Their protests helped persuade the city to reroute many diesel trucks that once clogged their neighborhood.

"You're fighting along, you never stop, but you don't see a huge blinding light at the end of your tunnel," said the Rev. Michael Doyle, a priest for the past 30 years at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Waterfront South. "You see little candles."

## **News from the San Joaquin Valley**

The Associated Press

in the Fresno Bee and S.F. Chronicle, Saturday, December 17, 2005

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - An environmental group is suing a dairy, saying it began construction on a project before complying with the latest air pollution requirements.

The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment sued C&R Vanderham Dairy Thursday in U.S. District Court in Fresno. The Center is representing the Association of Irrigated Residents, a Shafter group.

They allege the dairy did not get an air permit. Large dairies, one of the area's main industries, have been blamed for contributing to the Central Valley's horrible air quality. The region's growing population has had ranchers and residents warring over air and quality of life issues.

The dairy is not big enough to fall under requirements for the air permit mentioned in the lawsuit because the Vanderham's dairy will house 1,320 milk cows. A permit is required at 1,954 milk cows, said Rick McVaigh, compliance director for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

But the lawsuit contends that the dairy will house 680 calves and other animals in addition to their milk cows. They won't be used for milk but will still affect air quality, the group said.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Saturday, December 17, 2005:](#)

## **Another small step**

### **Air district's approval of fees on new development is good news.**

The San Joaquin Valley stepped out ahead of the nation Thursday, when the regional air district board voted to impose fees on new construction that adds to pollution. It's another small, but important step, in the long struggle to clean up the dirty air we all breathe.

The idea is simple: New construction means more people driving more cars and using more energy, which pollutes the air. New construction on the edges of existing urban areas — sprawl — is even worse, because it lengthens commutes and worsens traffic congestion.

It didn't come easy. Valley builders, backed by local and national supporters, waged a loud campaign against the new fees, claiming that they will make retail and commercial development less viable in the Valley and price many people out of the housing market.

Their shrill claims were wildly inflated. The new fees will barely be noticed as part of current real estate prices. And developers can dramatically reduce the new fees — minimal to begin with — by incorporating many pollution-reducing elements in their projects. We're not talking about radical innovations, but such things as sidewalks, landscaping, bike lanes and energy-efficient appliances and construction.

Building homes closer to jobs and commercial sites and, conversely, putting those projects closer to homes will also lower the fees. Building residential and commercial projects downtown could nearly reduce them to zero.

And the maximum fee for a new home on which no effort whatsoever has been made to make it air-friendly? It's all of \$780, rising to about \$1,700 in 2008. Spread that over a 30-year mortgage on a \$200,000 or \$300,000 home, and it disappears from sight.

In fact, the builders got off very lightly. Valley farmers have been required to make far more — and more costly — efforts against air pollution. They're getting some help from state and federal funds and grant money, but they're also paying for part of the increased costs out of their own pockets. The builders, on the other hand, will pass along every dime of these new fees to their customers.

The Valley's ag interests grumbled loudly, too, when they were asked to make those sacrifices. But they have made them, and continue to make them. They also joined the supporters of the new construction impact fees, pointing out that it is now the building industry's turn to contribute to solutions.

And all of us have a turn coming when we finally get around to dealing with the 800-pound air pollution gorilla — vehicle emissions.

These new mitigation fees will be used for a variety of clean-air purposes, including retrofitting or replacing many of the old and polluting school buses that travel Valley streets and roads.

The building industry may challenge all of this in court, of course. That would be too bad. These changes have been forced upon all of us by geography, climate and our own behavior. These

new fees are a bold step by a Valley air district that hasn't always been noted for boldness. They are good news for anyone in the Valley who breathes the air.

[Bakersfield Californian editorial, Sunday, December 18, 2005:](#)

### **Right decisions take courage**

Despite builders' opposition, the 11-member San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board unanimously adopted rules last week to curb air pollution caused by residential and commercial development. At the urging of Bakersfield's representative, Vice Mayor Mike Maggard, the board agreed to re-evaluate the controversial rules in five years.

Adoption of rules to control "indirect" sources of air pollution caused by development is required by state law authored by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. It allows the district to require builders pay a pollution fee or design projects to reduce pollution-causing vehicle use and conserve energy.

Maggard and Supervisor Barbara Patrick, Kern County's representative, likely will feel political heat from builders for their support of the rule. But they and other board members took necessary and reasonable action to clean up the valley air basin, which is one of the most polluted in the nation.

[Tri-Valley Herald editorial, Monday, December 19, 2005:](#)

Look, here come solar rebates

IT only makes sense in sunny California. State energy regulators last week unveiled an ambitious proposal to encourage the use of solar power. We say it's about time. We're 200 percent behind a plan that promotes increased use of this obvious energy source.

The California Solar Initiative was proposed by the state Public Utilities Commission. It would offer more than \$3 billion in rebates to consumers over the next 11 years with the goal of encouraging the installation of 3,000 megawatts of solar energy on 1 million houses, businesses and public buildings.

It picks up Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's push to increase the state's use of renewable energy sources. His "Million Solar Roofs" initiative ran into trouble with lawmakers after construction unions insisted on high wages for the panel installers.

Characteristically, the governor went around the lawmakers, this time to the PUC, persuading the commissioners to back the California Solar Initiative. The PUC will vote on the proposal next month following a 30-day public comment period.

So far the comments, particularly from environmentalists, have been favorable.

"With rising energy prices and continued air pollution, this is exactly the kind of landmark initiative California needs," said one clean energy advocate for Environment California.

Environmentalists predict the initiative will create jobs and result in cleaner air and a reduction of greenhouse gases contributing to global warming. They believe as solar power becomes more widely used, the cost will become more affordable.

We think they're correct. Any plan that reduces our dependence on oil, natural gas, coal and nuclear energy makes sense.

The initiative would set up a \$3.2 billion rebate fund available to homes, businesses, farms, schools and public buildings that install the rooftop panels. It would be funded through a consumer utility bill surcharge.

For every watt of solar capacity installed, a consumer will receive a \$2.80 rebate. So a homeowner or business that installs a 2,000-watt system would be eligible for a \$5,600 rebate from the PUC. The rebate would decrease by 10 percent each year until customers would receive a 25-cent-per-watt rebate in 2016.

The substantial rebate more than covers the cost of the installation. Combined with the resulting lower utility bills, the program makes the use of solar energy a no brainer.

But then it always has been.

[Stockton Record editorial, Monday, December 19, 2005](#)

## **A chilling development**

Members of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District approved new pollution-reducing rules Thursday as unusually stagnant air -- posing serious health threats -- hung like a damp blanket over the Valley.

The first day of winter is Wednesday, but a foggy stillness has descended, trapping soot, nitrates and ash.

In that gray and cold environment, the Valley's air-pollution regulators decided to impose first-in-the-nation regulations governing new construction projects and 18 of the region's largest wineries.

The rules are supposed to reduce air pollution by 10 percent in the San Joaquin Valley. We'll see.

Meanwhile, developers -- already paying substantial impact fees -- will need to rethink their projects.

Using a point system, the district will evaluate housing and commercial projects with a set of criteria.

Energy-efficient structures -- already being built -- would gain points with pollution cops. Sprawling housing developments wouldn't.

Builders will be encouraged to locate projects near mass transit and to add bicycle and pedestrian pathways.

Anything that reduces smog will help.

Fees will be phased in over three years beginning in 2006. By 2008, the cost of building a typical single-family home would be \$1,772 higher.

The Valley's largest wine makers also will be required to reduce pollution -- by 35 percent from existing operations.

Fortunately, the Fresno-based board will revisit the rules in 2010. By then, there needs to be measurable proof these fees and requirements have resulted in cleaner air.

It's certain they'll increase home prices in one of California's few remaining last affordable markets.

It's unclear whether they'll have any impact on human behavior, construction trends or sprawl.

Looking for a model?

The Sanctuary, a 7,000-home master-planned development by The Grupe Co., already is designed to incorporate environmentally friendly elements that far exceed anything the district board has proposed.

The subdivision planned for Shima Tract at the west end of Stockton's Hammer Lane combines ideas and concepts from the Urban Land Institute's 2002 report that encourages smart growth practices.

It includes a forested entry, villagelike town center, a single road planned for gas-power vehicles

(the rest is designed for foot, bicycle or electric-power vehicles), 300 acres for parks and seven miles of trails.

Even so, company executives oppose the new fees.

"I think it's the wrong approach," said Kevin Huber, The Grupe Co. president. "The degradation of air quality in the Valley is the result of several things and several industries and should not be borne just by the new home buyer and home builder."

By 2010, the validity of unilaterally imposing these fees will need to be borne out. The costs could be as chilling as the first day of winter.

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Monday, December 19, 2005:](#)

### **Money talked in tallow plant's removal**

Faith can move mountains. It takes money to have government remove a tallow plant. Government claimed it could do nothing to remedy the stupidity of former decision-makers who allowed a school and houses to develop around the tallow plant.

For decades the powerless appeared before local government officials to explain their plight and plead their case for relief from the Modesto Tallow Co.'s odor. What government refused to do for the powerless, they were anxious to do for the powerful. Without the odor, land around the tallow plant would increase 10 times in value.

The odor is gone and life will definitely be better in the neighborhood. Children will no longer vomit while at school and "better" development will occur. Houses will be built that the powerless will not be able to afford. The powerful will get richer. The powerless paid the price during the last few decades, but at least their children will be able to eat their lunch at school.

Carmen Sabbatino, former mayor of Modesto

[Modesto Bee editorial \(Short Takes\), Saturday, December 17, 2005](#)

**Thumbs up:** To the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for passing the indirect source rules that will put fees on new development that will be used to help fight pollution. The rules will bring another group - builders - to the table. Past rules had required industry and agriculture to help solve one of our region's most vexing health problems.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Monday, December 19, 2005:](#)

### **Measure C renewal is crucial to Fresno County**

The proposed revisions for Measure C sound like Fresno is taking a step in the right direction. Fresno County is in need of better public transportation and the new Measure C supports that, with enough money to run buses every 15 minutes on the busiest Fresno and Clovis routes.

People will be more willing to leave their cars at home and wait 15 minutes, as opposed to half an hour, for a bus. This will help reduce the pollution in Fresno's air.

Fresno's air quality will also be improved with the replacement of 900 old, high-polluting buses with new, cleaner-running models. Walking and riding bicycles will become more desirable and practical with new trails and bike lanes under the renewed Measure C.

An advanced transit system could further reduce our dependence on automobiles, in turn helping the quality of air.

Some people don't believe Fresnans would ever turn to public transportation in favor of single-occupancy vehicles, but until we make it more accessible and convenient, we'll never know. I believe many people would like to avoid the inconvenience and expense of parking, not to mention the high cost of gasoline, if only they could get around more efficiently by bus.

Alice Ryan, Fresno

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sunday, December 18, 2005:](#)

## **Lay off fireplaces, and go after vehicle emissions**

As we read the paper, we often find that there are absurd restrictions placed on our burning rights on what seems to be a daily basis, when "no burn days" are enforced by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

While these days are enforced with good intentions, they serve little purpose.

The amount of air pollution caused by fireplaces compared to the amount caused by cars is absolutely irrelevant. We continue to put restrictions on the burning of wood in our homes, but do very little about vehicle emissions in California.

Sitting by the fire on a cold winter night has been a tradition carried on by people throughout the world for thousands of years, and taking that away is not the solution to air pollution.

If this was the true cause of our pollution problems and global warming, then how come everything was fine until cars came along?

The real issue is vehicle emissions, not our prized tradition of fireplaces. Put restrictions on SUVs and trucks, not traditions.

Andrew Bohmer, Fresno