

## Heat wave causes a pileup of livestock carcasses

By Olivia Munoz, Associated Press Writer

In the Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, July 26, and S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Fresno, Calif. (AP) -- The record-setting heat wave blamed in the deaths of at least 50 people has also killed thousands of dairy cows and other livestock, leaving farmers with piles of carcasses and creating a backup at factories that turn the dead animals into pet food.

A combination of sweltering temperatures, growth in the state's dominant \$5 billion dairy industry and fewer plants to properly dispose of the animals have forced several counties to declare a state of emergency, allowing the dumping of dead livestock in landfills - something usually outlawed because of the health risks.

"But what can we do? We have to weigh the possible contamination to ground water versus piles of dead cows stinking and attracting flies," said Phil Larson, chairman of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

Fresno County, which reached 113 degrees in recent days, was one of the first to declare an emergency when a plant that handles the bulk of the region's dead animals broke down earlier this month. After the old carcasses began decomposing in the searing summer heat, county officials were forced to make the first such declaration in the county's history, Larson said.

"It wasn't any easy solution. It's not something we want to continue but we can't have piles of dead animals laying around," he said.

Dairy farmer Brian Pacheco said he sometimes waits days before a rendering plant will pick up his dead cows.

"And when they do come, they only take the ones that died that day," said Pacheco, who uses Baker Commodities, a rendering plant in Kerman. "I'm left with the old bodies."

Calls to Baker Commodities were not returned.

Pacheco has spent thousands of dollars to build shade structures and install misters and fans in his barns to keep his cows cool. He says that has translated into higher milk production and he loses fewer cattle than other area farmers, but he still sees 15-20 cows die each year from the heat, and this year it could be more.

San Joaquin County, which also has declared an emergency, estimated that its dairy farms were losing a total of 120 cows per day from the heat.

Individual dairy farmers could lose about 2 percent of their herd this year, according to industry experts.

Hundreds of thousands of chickens and turkeys - totaling more than 1 million pounds - have also died. But dairy farmers struggle with animals that don't sweat and aren't getting much respite at night.

The state Environmental Protection Agency issued guidelines earlier this month for farmers stuck with dead livestock. They can have them hauled to a landfill by licensed handlers or compost their animals on their property by burying them in manure, which is common in other states.

Usually, farmers in California take their dead animals to rendering plants, but many have closed amid odor complaints from growing communities nearby, accusations by environmentalists and lawsuits stemming from improper disposal.

In 1999, two Modesto Tallow Co. officials pleaded guilty to discharging animal parts into the Tuolumne River, a violation of the federal Clean Water Act. In 2003, the company paid a \$114,508 settlement in a case brought by the Solano County district attorney, who charged the plant with spilling blood and animal parts on roads.

Modesto Tallow was forced to close its doors in December as part of a settlement in a lawsuit brought by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District that claimed the plant repeatedly violated air pollution standards.

The closing left the plant in Kerman the only one to handle the dead animals from the Stanislaus County line down to Bakersfield, posing a problem to a region where huge dairy farms are growing.

"They're just sitting out there in the sun, drawing flies," Pacheco said.

## **Valley heat doesn't waver**

### **Oppressive conditions may be at fault in 56 deaths statewide.**

By Barbara Anderson

The Fresno Bee, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Coroners in the central San Joaquin Valley continued to investigate possible heat-related deaths on Tuesday, as an oppressive six-day heat wave overwhelmed hospitals with the ill and sent people to air-conditioned community centers for relief from triple-digit temperatures.

Authorities said as many as 14 deaths in Fresno County - including a mother and son who died together - may be heat-related, and at least one Madera County death was attributed to the heat. Hot weather was being investigated as a possible cause of another death in Kings County.

Statewide, the suspected death toll from the heat reached 56 on Tuesday, but the number included only 10 death investigations in Fresno County.

Fresno's high Tuesday was 113 degrees, a record for July 25. And Tuesday's overnight low of 82 degrees broke the record of 81 degrees set in 1906.

Today, temperatures in Fresno are expected to reach 110 degrees.

And it will be more of the same for Thursday, said David Specter, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Hanford.

But relief is in sight. Friday, temperatures should dip and may reach near-normal levels by Monday, with a high that day predicted to be 98 degrees.

The unrelenting heat in the Valley has kept law enforcement busy. Between Friday and Monday, Fresno County coroner's deputies investigated 29 deaths - not all heat-related. But Fresno County Coroner Lorelee Cervantes confirmed three deaths as primarily heat-related and said 11 other deaths could be heat-caused.

Rodolfo Valladares, 38, a field worker, was among those whose deaths were related to heat, she said. Valladares died Tuesday at University Medical Center.

Cervantes did not know whether Valladares was brought to the hospital by ambulance or where he was when he collapsed. His county of residence also was unknown, she said.

Cervantes said heat also contributed to the death of a man who was found outside the Fresno Rescue Mission. He died Saturday. The man's identity was being withheld until family members could be found.

The third heat-related death was of a man found Sunday in the grass at Huntington Boulevard and Callisch Street. Coroner's deputies were trying to identify the man, Cervantes said.

On Tuesday, Fresno fire officials said heat may have contributed to the deaths of a mother and son found in their home in central Fresno about 9:30 a.m.

The air conditioner was turned off in the La Salle Street house occupied by the woman, who was in her 80s, and the man in his 50s, said Fire Department spokesman Ken Shockley. The temperature inside the home was 100 degrees, he said.

Neighbor Lisa Ruiz said she never heard the air conditioner being used next door.

Ruiz said the elderly woman had been ill and her son took care of her.

"It's real sad for me because I saw them every day," she said.

Kings County authorities were investigating a recent death as a possible heat-related fatality. Kings County Assistant Sheriff Randy Montejano said an autopsy Tuesday on an elderly woman could not confirm whether her death was heat-related, and more tests were needed.

Madera Community Hospital reported one heat-related death Sunday.

Hospital staff revived a 41-year-old man, but he died later in the intensive-care unit, said Robert Toman, clinical director of emergency services.

Mike Molsbergen, chief deputy coroner for Madera County, said the man was found late Saturday near the Fresno River walkway and Lake Street in Madera. Identification of the man was pending, as was notification of his family, he said.

The man had a temperature of 106.5 degrees when he was picked up by ambulance, Molsbergen said. He also had a blood alcohol level of 0.26. A level of 0.08 is considered legally drunk in California.

"Alcohol intoxication and heat just do not go together," Molsbergen said.

Ambulance drivers scrambled in the heat to keep up with calls.

Patients overwhelmed University Medical Center on Monday.

The hospital was at capacity between 7 and 9 p.m. and could not accept ambulances other than those with trauma patients, said Daniel Lynch, director of emergency medical services for Fresno County.

"They were on the brink of actually closing their hospital to the public totally, and what we did was step in and ask if they could close them to patients from the medical side and keep them open to trauma," Lynch said.

Sunday and Monday were the busiest days on record for emergency ambulance responses, said Todd Valeri, general manager at American Ambulance.

On an average day, drivers respond to 237 calls, Valeri said. But on Sunday, ambulance drivers responded 308 times and 329 times on Monday.

It wasn't known whether all the ambulance calls were heat-related, but 25 patients complained of heat-related illnesses Monday, he said.

City officials urged residents to take advantage of community centers open to the public. And Fresno Area Express buses were sent to Caruthers, Biola, Five Points, Easton and Laton for people to sit in and cool off.

Few, if any, residents took advantage of the mobile shelters, however. Mike Yager, who was walking near the bus on Oak and Tahoe avenues, said he didn't know the bus was a cooling center.

The unmarked buses should have signs identifying them as cooling centers, and fliers should be circulated in the community to get the word out, Yager said.

Clovis Unified opened Dry Creek Elementary, Kastner Intermediate, Jefferson Elementary and Temperance-Kutner Elementary to the public as shelters Tuesday. The schools will remain open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day through Friday.

Mary Pasos, 60, and her family took advantage of the air conditioning at the Ted C. Wills Community Center in Fresno on Tuesday.

With the evaporative cooler in their Tower District home out of action, the air was stifling, Pasos said. "My house is like an oven, it's so hot."

Health officials said the high temperatures are especially a concern for people with chronic health problems, such as lung and heart disease and diabetes.

For example, blood sugar levels can spike in diabetics who become dehydrated from the heat. With the potential for heat-related electrical outages, officials warned that insulin must be kept at 84 degrees or cooler or it loses its potency. Heat can also destroy strips to measure blood sugar levels.

Medications for mental illness, as well as diuretics for heart disease can affect how the body reacts to heat, said Dr. Kenneth Bird, deputy health officer for Fresno County.

"Anybody with chronic disease, it just makes them much more prone to suffer the consequences of those illnesses with that additional physical stressor," Bird said.

The combination of hot air and smog is dangerous for people with asthma, said Dr. A.M. Aminian, a Fresno allergist.

High temperatures dry air passages, he said. As people lose moisture in their nose, throat and lungs, the mucus becomes dry and hardened and makes breathing difficult.

People with asthma should avoid being outdoors during peak smog times, between noon and 6 p.m., Aminian said. And they should drink plenty of water.

Veterinarians warned dog owners to keep their pets cool.

"We've probably had seven or eight deaths in the last seven or eight days - about one a day," said Kevin Lazarcheff, a veterinarian at Veterinary Emergency Services Inc., in Fresno.

"The best thing to do is to keep them where you are: inside with the air conditioning," he said. "It's just common sense. If it's too hot for you, it's too hot for them."

## **High temps, bad air**

### **Heat exhaustion on the rise, local hospitals report**

By RYANNE PERSINGER, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

It's hot.

This past week, Visalia residents have been waking up to 75 to 80-degree weather — and if you go to bed before 10 p.m. it's still at least 90 degrees outside, according to the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Carlos Molina, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said the average humidity for Visalia is near 30 percent, and typically around 15 percent to 20 percent. That makes the string of 12 straight 100-degree days in Visalia even more uncomfortable.

"It's double the normal amount we would see out here," Molina said. "So people actually feel the muggy and humid conditions."

### **Unhealthful air**

So far this summer, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has declared 19 Spare The Air days; but the summer's not over. On Spare The Air days, consumers are encouraged to cut back on driving and other pollution-producing activities.

Brenda Turner, a public information representative with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said when you hit triple-digit numbers, you're probably looking at a Spare The Air Day.

"A lot of summers in Tulare County is in that unhealthy for sensitive [people] range."

But Turner explained that because a Spare The Air Day is declared, it doesn't necessarily mean that's the case.

"Even when we have Spare The Air days in Tulare County ... it's because a surrounding county has one," Turner said. "[Tulare County] usually gets one because Fresno or Kern County has a Spare The Air Day."

### **Hospitals**

Poor air quality and high temperatures aren't mixing well with people around Tulare County.

At Kaweah Delta Health Care District Tuesday, hospital officials said they have had 11 cases of heat exhaustion in the past seven days.

Angela Bouma, a marketing specialist for the hospital, said people are worn out and are not staying hydrated during the heat wave.

The Tulare District Hospital in Tulare reported four people hospitalized in the past four days. One was treated and released, two are being treated and one is an elderly female who is in the intensive-care unit.

Rick Elkins, the director of public information at the hospital, said the elderly woman is in critical condition. "She was in critical condition and has an extremely high temperature, but I don't know if she was without power or without air conditioning," Elkins said.

Elkins said a number of people suffering from heat-related problems have been coming to the emergency department of the hospital to be treated.

Tuesday the hospital opened up its lobby and provided water for people who need to escape the heat.

Elkins said he hopes the hospital doesn't lose power, but added that the hospital has a generator which is used for back up.

### **Power**

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is warning California residents about the dangers of using a generator in a power outage.

Mark Ross, a spokesperson for the Commission, said using a generator can cause carbon monoxide poisoning if it is not used correctly.

"Do not use them inside [the home], in a garage or an enclosed area," Ross said. Ross said if it's outside, it needs to be as far away as possible.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide include flu like symptoms, nausea, headaches, feeling dizzy or weak or becoming tired or groggy.

Bill DeLain, a region manager for the San Joaquin Valley Region Southern California Edison, said about 150 residents were experiencing some power outages as of 5:30 p.m. last night.

"It's basically all the result of the heat wave and heavy usage," DeLain said. "For the most part, it's replacing overloaded transformers and related equipment."

DeLain said it's always helpful when customers can conserve energy through the afternoon peak by setting their thermostats at higher temperatures.

## **County anti-sprawl initiative unlikely to hit ballot until '08**

By GARTH STAPLEY

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Stanislaus County supervisors' 3-2 vote Tuesday eliminated any chance of a countywide vote on a sprawl initiative before 2008.

But fans of the Stamp Out Sprawl initiative say legal fine print might require officials to abide by its far-reaching growth restrictions until voters have their say.

That would amount to a backfire on supervisors, who would immediately lose control over housing projects anywhere in the county.

Supervisors on Tuesday all but ignored the possible twist despite warnings from Modesto City Councilman Garrad Marsh and former Councilman Denny Jackman.

Their argument is based on seemingly inconclusive fine print in the anti-sprawl initiative, whose provisions would last 30 years.

Jackman cited one section of the initiative that could block changes to county plans before the initiative goes to the voters.

### **Report due Aug. 15**

Supervisor Jeff Grover was the only leader to ask for a legal interpretation from County Counsel Mick Krausnick, who deferred until Aug. 15.

Tuesday's split vote delayed until then a report on the initiative's far-reaching effects. But the date is four days after election officials' deadline to put the matter on the November ballot, as Marsh and Jackman had hoped.

"The report should not be used to delay the citizens' right to vote on this issue," said Dallas Kadry, treasurer of a petition drive to qualify the issue for the ballot.

She said she doubted whether the report would change supervisors' open hostility toward the initiative.

All five supervisors spoke against it. Two said it is a blatant attempt at stopping the county's plan to further develop Salida, including adding 2,500 homes to the town of 14,000 people, by far the county's largest unincorporated community.

But Grover, whose district includes Salida, and Supervisor Bill O'Brien voted against the Aug. 15 report, solely because the delay will rob voters of the chance to weigh in this year. More than 16,000 people signed petitions, forcing the issue onto a countywide ballot - eventually.

"I have no intention of putting a bull's-eye on my chest," Grover said, even though the initiative is odious to him. He is fighting to keep his seat in a November runoff with Gary Lopez, a Modesto fire captain and school board member.

The initiative's ban on housing in Salida would "make it impossible for us to complete the steps necessary for incorporation," said Jeanette Moore. She is a member of the Salida Municipal Advisory Council, which has no decision-making authority but advises county leaders.

### **No vote likely until 2008**

Supervisors Ray Simon, Jim DeMartini and Tom Mayfield opposed the initiative and voted for the Aug. 15 report.

"This is just one group of developers pitted against another on who controls the land," DeMartini said.

Jackman noted that on Aug. 15, supervisors will have the option of skipping a vote of the people by simply putting the initiative's provisions into law. Far more likely is their only other alternative - a ballot item on the next statewide election, in June 2008.

"The nine cities would not be affected by this at all," Mayfield said. "Who do you think is causing all the sprawl? Who keeps asking for more and more land (for development)? Is it the county or is it the cities?"

A report on the initiative, renamed by Krausnick's office "The 30-year Land Use Restriction Initiative," is scheduled to go before county supervisors at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15 in the basement chamber at Tenth Street Place.

### **AT A GLANCE**

**WHAT HAPPENED:** On a split vote, Stanislaus County supervisors effectively delayed for nearly two years a public vote on whether new homes will be built only in cities.

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Concerns about growth top lists of peoples' worries about local issues, surveys suggest. The initiative could kill a pending Salida growth plan, which calls for 2,500 more homes.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** An Aug. 15 report will explain how proposed restrictions could affect tax money needed for roads, schools, parks and sewers in unincorporated areas, the county's attorney said.

### **TUESDAY'S ACTIONS**

Stanislaus County supervisors on Tuesday unanimously:

- Revised rules for produce stands, allowing them to expand from a maximum of 600 square feet to 1,600 square feet and to let operators use electric hookups. Produce markets, a separate type of business, would continue to have a 3,500-square-foot size limit. Supervisor Bill O'Brien, who owns grocery stores, abstained from voting on this item.
- Decided to auction a damaged gas flare vandalized at the Geer Road landfill. It has burned methane gas emitted from rotting waste since the landfill closed in 1990. Another was installed in 1996.

- Appointed Coleen Sanguinetti to the Crows Landing Community Services District board of directors until the next district election in 2007.

## **Wal-Mart project opinions sought**

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Concerned about what 450 trucks driving in and out of the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center every day would do to Merced's air quality?

The city wants to hear from you Thursday.

City planners will host two public meetings to hear from residents about which concerns should be studied in the environmental impact report about the proposed 1.2 million- square-foot Wal-Mart distribution center.

"People might have lots of questions, but they should be aware of the fact that we're not going to have answers to those questions," said Planning Manager Kim Espinosa. "We're just looking for the questions so we can prepare the answers."

The answers will be ready in January 2007, when consulting group EDAW, Inc. is slated to finish the environmental impact report.

The City Council approved EDAW's \$344,655 consulting contract in May; Wal-Mart will pay for the entire project.

State environmental laws require impact reports for large projects like the Wal-Mart distribution center. The proposed center would cover an area the size of 250 football fields between Childs and Gerard avenues, west of Tower Road.

It would operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Residents who live in the area are worried about how the center would affect traffic, noise and property values, said Joel Knox, chairman of the Golden Valley Neighborhood Association.

"This is an opportunity for other individuals in the area to speak out about their concerns," said Knox. "There's a lot of stuff that we don't hear until someone else brings it up."

"I'm a schoolteacher, I'm not in the business of investigating developers."

While debate about what kind of jobs the distribution center would provide has been a hot topic in recent months, economic issues won't be discussed at the Thursday meetings, said Espinosa.

"The environmental impact report is a state-required document and it deals with environmental issues," said Espinosa. "It doesn't deal with social issues. It doesn't deal with wages and benefits."

Knox said he wants residents from all over Merced to attend the meeting.

"I hope we get individuals that attend from not just the area around the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center because if this goes in, it will affect every citizen in Merced, north and south," said Knox.

### **Wal-Mart meeting**

**WHAT:** Two public meetings about what should be studied in the environmental impact report for the proposed Wal-Mart distribution center.

**WHEN:** 2:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Thursday

**WHO:** The afternoon meeting is for state and local government agencies and the public. The evening meeting is for the public.

**WHERE:** City Council chambers, 678 W. 18th St.

## **Ag Bag**

Valley Voice Newspaper, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Valley Air Board is assisting farmers in retrofitting older forklifts that run on propane or gasoline with a catalytic control device that will cut emissions. The government is picking up 100 percent of the cost. A series of workshops were held in the past few weeks for farmers and other ag enterprise including packing houses although packing houses with three or less forklifts are exempt. Pre-1990 forklifts are exempt but a farmer can still get a new forklift based on the number of hours it is used.

## **Calls raised for free transit all of the time**

### **Ridership surges on Spare the Air days**

By Rachel Gordon, staff writer

S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

Ridership on the Bay Area's public transit systems spiked during the six Spare the Air days when passengers were offered free rides in exchange for parking their polluting cars, prompting some local officials to call for making mass transit free all the time.

The higher numbers generated complaints from some regular commuters who were unhappy with the crowded trains, buses and boats, and the associated delays in service. Reported crime also was up on BART, possibly because paying customers are less likely to vandalize vehicles or torment passengers, said several transit officials.

Despite the scattered gripes, some Bay Area officials want to use the popularity of the Spare the Air no-fare days to push for making free passage the norm.

Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty is one of the most vocal proponents.

"We're not going to be able to pave our way out of the congestion we have today," said Haggerty, who also serves on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the regional transportation planning agency. "We have to look at expanding ridership on public transit."

Offering free rides is one way to do that, he said.

But free is relative. Public transit agencies in the nine Bay Area counties collect nearly \$517 million a year at the fare box to help fund operations, many of which are subsidized by grants, taxes and tolls. Revenue to replace fares would have to be found elsewhere.

There are costs associated with collecting fares, but they are nowhere near the half-billion dollar mark, said Randy Rentschler, legislative and public affairs director for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Some cities, such as Portland and Seattle, provide free bus service in their downtown districts. Others, including San Francisco, give free rides on New Year's Eve with the intent of keeping drunken drivers off the roads. Several cities across the country mirror the Bay Area municipalities in offering free service or reduced fares when air pollution is particularly bad. But no major transit agency in the United States has free service year-round.

There are various ways to subsidize a free-fare program in the Bay Area but all would face tremendous political hurdles.

With about 5 million trucks and cars in the Bay Area, officials could tack a \$100 surcharge onto annual registration fees. Or they could raise the sales tax or bridge tolls to fund a free-transit program.

Another option is to cut public transit service to reduce operational costs.

San Francisco Supervisor Tom Ammiano, who also serves on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, said the notion of year-round free transit "is something that should be pursued. The question, of course, is where would we get the money for this?"

One idea Ammiano has unsuccessfully pushed was to impose a special assessment on downtown businesses to help fund the Municipal Railway.

Haggerty says the federal government should assist in setting up a 1-year pilot project to provide free transit with the goal of reducing air pollution. The government can withhold federal transportation funds when regions exceed federal air pollution standards.

The Bay Area already has blown through this year's budget for free-transit on Spare the Air days, spending nearly \$14 million in subsidies to transit agencies that lost fare revenue.

The designation for the free-fare days -- three in June and three earlier this month -- came when the Bay Area Air Quality Management District projected that smog might exceed federal health-based limits. Originally, there was enough money for three days, but the unusually hot, wind-free conditions prompted the expenditure of additional money for three more days.

The program -- formed with the dual goal of lessening air pollution and generating interest in public transit -- proved to be a success, with an increase of ridership throughout the more than two dozen public transit systems that participated. It also helped to keep air pollution levels in check, officials reported.

BART, for instance, saw an increase of between 16,000 and 33,000 additional boardings on the days when there was no charge. That's on top of the 315,000 or so typical weekday boardings. The number of people using ferries operated by the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District ballooned, as well. On July 21, for example, ridership on the Sausalito ferry jumped 510 percent, with nearly 12,000 boardings.

A push to fund more free-fare days may come as early as today when the governing board of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission meets.

"Can we scare up a few million dollars more? Sure," said Rentschler of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which allocates about \$1.5 billion a year for various transit and roadway projects. But, he noted, the extra allocation likely would mean less money for something else.

**By the numbers:**

- Cost of each free-transit Spare the Air Day: \$2.3 million
- Number of free-transit days in 2006: 6
- Number of free-transit days in 2005: 1
- Number of free-transit days in 2004: 2
- Annual revenue Bay Area public transit agencies collect at the fare box: \$516.7 million
- Bay Area bus route with the most weekday boardings: the Municipal Railway's 38-Geary line with 49,300

Source: MTC

**Hot? Yes. Global Warming? Maybe.**

**Causes of the current heat wave are complex. Drought, high pressure and sprawl all play roles.**

By Robert Lee Hotz and Erin Cline, staff writers

L.A. Times, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

The heat was unreal - so blistering that a windowsill thermometer overlooking Olympic Boulevard in downtown Los Angeles blew its top when the mercury hit 130 degrees. People consumed so much water that parts of the city briefly ran dry. Four people died. Dozens were hospitalized.

It was still 89 degrees at 1 a.m.

The record hot spell did not occur in 2006, but 1955, long before scientists raised the prospect of global warming and climate change.

The extreme temperatures of this year's heat wave have been so intense that they have created a sense of fundamental change - that somehow Los Angeles is on the verge of a searing future.

But few events occur with such regularity or are so quickly forgotten as Southland heat waves, with extremes of temperature rising and falling in a regular rhythm like rolling curls of surf.

Climate experts at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in La Cañada Flintridge and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla cautioned Tuesday that no single event - no matter how unusual - could be directly attributed to global warming and the effects of pollution.

There is such natural variability in temperature that even a record scorcher is just one data point in a long temperature timeline.

"To call it global warming would be overdoing it," said climatologist Daniel R. Cayan of Scripps and the U.S. Geological Survey. "This is largely natural variability."

But the current heat wave, which has been brewing since May, has nonetheless raised alarms. It is simmering with sustained intensity, echoing record high temperatures now wilting Europe and Asia.

"There may be some exacerbating climate change ingredient," Cayan said. "In fact, it is almost certain."

The current high temperatures fit with extremes that have been on an upward arc for the last century and are in line with computer projections for more records in the future.

"What we now call extreme events are becoming run-of-the-mill happenings," said Scripps climatologist Tim Barnett.

The first six months of 2006 were the warmest in the United States since record-keeping began in 1895, according to the National Climatic Data Center. The 10 hottest years on record have all occurred since 1990, a trend that a majority of scientists say is in large part attributable to human production of greenhouse gases, which trap heat in the atmosphere.

All told, the planet has been slowly warming for a century, with Earth's average temperature rising by 1.6 degrees. In Los Angeles, the average daytime temperature has increased 3 degrees over the last century, while nighttime temperatures have increased 7 degrees, records show.

In 1939, a high of 107 degrees broke all records. By 1955, the record high was 108 degrees; it crept to 109 degrees by 1963, and in 1990 reached 112 degrees.

Such temperature extremes arise from a cat's cradle of causes, experts said. The current weather is affected by an extended regional drought and broader, long-term climate trends that encompass much of the Northern Hemisphere.

The effects of urban development also play a major role, as thousands of square miles of dry chaparral are transformed into highways, housing tracts and strip malls - all of which retain heat.

The immediate cause of the current heat is a lingering high-pressure system centered over the Four Corners region of the Southwest, said JPL climatologist William Patzert.

As it slowly turns clockwise at about 15 mph, that immense wheel of air also sweeps the ocean's warm surface water against the Southern California coast, eliminating the cooling marine breeze that tempers the local climate, he said.

An extended drought in the Western states has strengthened the high-pressure system, while the jet stream, which in a normal year would help cool the West, has kept north of the Canadian border.

"This heat wave is coast to coast, border to border," Patzert said. "It has been going on for six weeks now where temperatures have been abnormally high. Now they are off the scale."

The patterns have come and gone in the past.

In July 1931, sweltering Angelenos bemoaned the 37th straight day of extreme high temperatures - at that point the longest stretch of hot, humid local weather in the history of the National Weather Service.

Few recalled that, a generation earlier, as temperature records shattered in July 1891, perspiring businessmen sought shelter in the cool of the Grand Opera House and worried that such searing temperatures might mar efforts to market California's perfect climate to Easterners.

No one then would have blamed global warming - a concept that did not gain scientific currency until the 1980s.

Since then, scientific understanding has progressed in lock step with a contentious political debate.

The debate eludes resolution because of the difficulty of separating normal temperature swings from longer trends. In the effort to understand climate, certainty comes only with the hindsight of centuries.

The severity of the current heat wave, in which temperatures this month have reached 100 degrees or more for at least 10 straight days, marks the first time in 57 years that both Northern and Southern California have experienced simultaneous, extended high temperatures, California's Undersecretary for Energy Affairs, Joe Desmond, said Tuesday.

"This is a historic heat wave," Desmond said.

Still, Patzert said of California's weather: "Is that a part of global warming? I don't know."

Some scientists, however, believe it a harbinger of more extreme summers in decades to come.

"People talk about tipping points," said Scripps' Barnett. "We have gone past it. There is nothing we can do to stop it now. The only question is how big a hit we are going to take."

Whatever the ultimate scientific truth, this month's weather has been for many Southern Californians a perceptual tipping point that brought home the possibility of global warming, just as the fury of Hurricane Katrina did for the people of New Orleans.

Inside the air-conditioned darkness of the Majestic Crest Theatre in Westwood, Max Furstenau, 18, was cleaning up after Tuesday's 3 p.m. showing of "An Inconvenient Truth," in which former Vice President Al Gore made the case for global warming.

Outside, the weather had finally cooled to the comfortable mid-80s. The day before had hit 110 degrees, breaking the record of 107 set in 1954.

"I know it's happening," Furstenau said.

## **Suits: Steel firm making people sick**

### **Groups say Berkeley foundry is not complying with federal Clean Air Act**

By Kristin Bender, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 26, 2006

BERKELEY — Pacific Steel Casting, the nation's fourth largest steel foundry, faces two lawsuits from community groups who say odoriferous pollution is giving people headaches, nausea and chest tightness.

Communities for a Better Environment, an Oakland-based environmental health and justice organization, last week filed a federal Clean Air Act lawsuit against the 74-year-old West Berkeley foundry that makes such things as trucking and sewer parts and castings for forklifts.

"Pacific Steel has been causing a nuisance in this community for a long time. For years, neighbors have complained to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District about the strong odors from the foundry," wrote West Berkeley resident Janice Schroeder, a member of Communities for a Better Environment.

"It's time that the company become a good neighbor, comply with pollution limits and provide the community with information about what's coming out of the plant."

The lawsuit seeks to fine the plant between \$27,500 and \$32,500 per day for every violation of the Clean Air Act from December 2002 to March 2004.

Plant officials said the suit, which comes months after the air quality district ordered the company to pay \$17,500 in fines because of 2004 notices of violations, is not based on fact.

"Pacific Steel will vigorously defend against the allegations asserted by the plaintiffs' lawsuit," said company spokeswoman Elizabeth Jewel. "It will become clear that (the) plaintiff's allegations are not supported by the evidence."

Neighborhood Solutions, which works with residents to solve neighborhood issues, last week filed a small claims suit against Pacific Steel on behalf of 25 plaintiffs, said executive director Grace Neufeld. Each plaintiff is seeking up to \$7,500 in that lawsuit.

"We want them to stop emitting these noxious odors and conduct their business with consideration for the people that live nearby," she said. "We hope this is really going to force them to get serious, not just make symbolic gestures." Neufeld said a hearing date should be set within 60 days.

Jewel said the company intends to defend itself against every plaintiff.

The federal lawsuit by Communities for a Better Environment of Oakland challenges the company to reduce its air emissions to legal limits and come clean about pollution from its facility, said Adrienne Bloch, an attorney for the group.

"We're not trying to shut down this facility. We just want them to comply with the law, specifically with the Clean Air Act," Bloch said.

Pacific Steel has until Aug. 8 to respond to the suit.

Specifically, the group claims Pacific Steel may be emitting on average more than 12 times the levels of pollutants allowed for one source by its current operating permit, and has failed to maintain proper records as mandated by federal law. Jewel declined comment on that claim.

Bloch said the plant also is slated to produce a health risk assessment, which community groups have yet to see.

"The community wants more information about the facility and the health risks that the facility poses. And they want some kind of say in any subsequent permit the facility is issued."

Under a legal settlement with the air district, Pacific Steel is working on installing a \$2 million system in one of the plants to reduce odor emissions.

"We are moving forward as quickly as we possibly can. We are working closely with the city of Berkeley to finalize these building permits, and we expect that the carbon system will be installed by late fall," she said.

The company installed similar carbon filters in Plants 1 and 2 in 1991 and 1985 respectively, reducing odor complaints significantly.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Wednesday, July 26, 2006:](#)

## **Public input vital**

### **Valley air district wants to hear all voices on how to clean our air.**

The Valley has a monumental mountain to climb in its effort to clean up the air we breathe. There is a 2013 deadline in place that will require we eliminate about half of the smog we generate now. We don't have a prayer of meeting that deadline unless everyone in the Valley is involved in the effort.

To that end, the Valley's air district is hosting a series of meetings this week to spread the word on the seriousness of the problem, and to seek the public's input on solutions. It's an opportunity concerned citizens should not miss.

It's easy for the special interests - and they are arrayed on every side of the air pollution issue - to get the ear of lawmakers and regulators.

But the voices of private citizens are every bit as important. That's why it's crucial that these meetings be well attended - even if it means braving the Valley's sweltering heat.

The largest single part of our problem in the Valley is the pollution produced by the vehicles we drive. All those cars, trucks, buses and even train locomotives account for as much as 60% of the problem.

Here's the killer: The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has essentially no say in regulating those emissions. That power is at the state and federal level.

Here's one suggestion: The district should, in the absence of direct power over so-called "mobile sources" of pollution, be lobbying hard at the state and federal levels for changes that will help us in the Valley. One example: The federal government's failure to raise the fleet fuel efficiency standards for autos and trucks means more pollution in the Valley. The air district should be pushing nonstop for better standards.

There is much more the district can do, and a lot of that work is already under way. But even more needs to be done - and that's where the public comes in.

We often hear that this new regulation or that new prohibition, whether it's open-field burning or fireplace regulation, will only address small bits of the problem suggesting that those efforts aren't worth making.

But that ignores the fact that while one particular rule may only reduce, say, 2% of the pollution, 10 such measures will reduce the total by one-fifth - a gain surely worth the effort.

Bring your ideas to the Air Quality Town Hall meetings. They start today in Bakersfield and Delano, move to Fresno and Huron on Thursday and wind up in Modesto and Stockton on Friday.

This is not someone else's problem. We're all responsible for the foul air in the Valley, and we all have an obligation to be involved in cleaning it up.