

## **Clean air target set: 2024**

### **Two-thirds of speakers at a public hearing advocated delaying a vote on Valley benchmark.**

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee  
Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Despite a wave of public opposition, the local air board decided Monday to accept a controversial plan to clean up smog by 2024, more than a decade beyond the current deadline.

If state and federal officials also approve it, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will be alone in the nation's worst category for smog offenders -- extreme nonattainment. The South Coast Air Basin also is expected to ask for the same designation.

More than 90 speakers spoke in the public hearing session, about two-thirds of them asking for the board to delay voting for six months. Many said the district should figure a way to clean up the air by 2017 and save residents from further suffering.

"This plan has not won the confidence of the community," said Kathryn Phillips of Environmental Defense, a national environmental advocacy group.

Air board members said the plan must go to the state for approval and move on to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by June 15. If it is late, EPA would give the Valley 18 months to submit the plan.

Failure to submit an acceptable plan would eventually lead to sanctions, such as freezing up to \$2 billion in road-building funds.

"We've been criticized for not having a plan in on time before," said board member William O'Brien, a Stanislaus County supervisor. "Now we're being criticized for having one in on time."

The vote was 9-2, the two dissenters being board newcomers Henry T. Perea of Fresno and Raji Brar of Arvin. Arvin had more than 60 violations of the federal health standard last summer, the highest number in the country.

"For me to go back and tell my constituents that there's nothing we can do," Arvin Council Member Brar said, "that's unacceptable. Something's wrong. Something's not working."

District leaders said engine technology simply will not exist soon enough to clean up smog from diesel engines, the biggest pollution source.

Seyed Sadredin, executive director, said the district would push state and federal governments, which control vehicle emissions.

The Valley must reduce 75% of a smog-forming gas called oxides of nitrogen, which come from combustion sources such as vehicles. After 2020, the final pollution reductions in the plan rely on technologies that have not yet been identified.

Air officials also said they want to develop other pollution-control strategies, such as a complex scheme to move shipping ports from Southern California to Northern California. The move would eliminate a lot of south-to-north diesel truck traffic that makes its way through the Valley.

Environmentalists, health advocates and community activists said that idea and others already should be in the plan. On bad smog days, for instance, the district should enforce a ban on old, polluting trucks, cars, boats and commercial equipment, such as tractors, some advocates said.

Air officials said such a ban would be too harsh on businesses, resulting in three months of no-farm days for many growers or no-drive days for people just going to work. Advocates replied that now is the time to consider all possibilities to prevent more exposure to unhealthy air.

Medical advocates said ozone, the corrosive main gas in smog, can damage skin, eyes and lungs. Research has shown it triggers asthma, bronchial problems and other diseases. Many who spoke Monday have lung problems.

"I always have to take my inhaler when I go somewhere," said asthmatic Stephanie Camaroda of the Latino Issues Forum, an activist group in Fresno. "It will only worsen the quality of life to wait until 2024."

### **District OKs plan with extension to clean air**

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Members of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's governing board approved a plan Monday to cut the valley's smog to a level that meets federal standards by 2023.

The decision came despite please from clean-air advocates to take another six months to research ways to clean the air sooner.

"At the end of the day, we have to ... approve this plan and move forward with cleaning the air without any delay," said J. Steven Worthley, a Tulare County supervisor who chairs the 11-member governing board.

The federal government had given the valley an initial deadline of 2013 for meeting the smog standard. But air district staff, who prepared the plan, said it would be impossible to clean the air that soon because of the large reduction in emissions that are needed. As a result, the plan they submitted to the board calls for an 11-year extension to the deadline, the most that can be requested.

The plan, which is estimated to cost \$20 billion, will tighten existing regulations on valley industries and will lead to a slate of new rules to reduce emissions that form smog.

Officials with the state Air Resources Board have also agreed that the valley cannot meet the federal standards by 2013.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must ultimately approve the plan.

Despite the additional time needed to clean the air, 90 percent of the valley would reach attainment by 2020 under the plan, air district officials said. However, the valley's worst air pockets, Arvin and northwest Fresno, won't come into compliance until 2023.

The valley cannot be considered in attainment for smog until all areas have met the federal standard.

The governing board approved the plan by a 9-2 vote. Raji Brar, an Arvin councilwoman, and, Henry Perea, a Fresno councilman, voted against the plan.

Brar, who was appointed to the board earlier this year, said she couldn't accept that Arvin residents would have to wait so long to breathe healthy air.

"For me to go back to my constituents and say, 'There's nothing more we can do,' ... that's not acceptable," she said. "This is a public health crisis."

### **Air quality officials seek an extension**

**A San Joaquin Valley board votes to ask federal regulators for 11 additional years to meet ozone standards.**

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer  
LA Times

May 1, 2007

Air quality officials in the San Joaquin Valley, one of the smoggiest places in the nation, voted Monday to ask federal regulators for 11 additional years to meet ozone standards, saying the problem could not be solved with current technology.

The sprawling farm region faces a 2013 deadline for reducing ozone smog to meet federal standards.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board voted 9 to 2 Monday night to ask federal authorities for "extreme" air status for the Central Valley, allowing it to receive an extension to 2024 to comply with the Clean Air Act.

"We have no legal options to do anything else," said district spokeswoman Jaime Holt, adding that current technologies and funding levels are inadequate for solving the problem any sooner. The "extreme" air designation, the worst under the Clean Air Act, is not common, Holt said, but has been used in the past, including a few years ago in the Central Valley.

State and federal regulators, who must still review the extension and the district's cleanup plan, suggested Monday that they would approve it.

The decision infuriated public health, environmental, religious and community groups.

"We're very disappointed. It's a tragedy. This has condemned Valley residents to breathe dirty air for an extra 11 years," Liza Bolanos, of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, said after the public hearing in Fresno.

Scores of speakers argued against the extension, including several doctors who testified that ozone increases asthma and contributes to premature death from lung disease.

Industry groups, including dairy farmers and oil refiners, said that they were willing to do their part but that the Central Valley's economy would suffer if the extension were not approved.

"We believe [the plan] is the expeditious, prudent choice in this time. We do not believe in stronger recommendations ... but we believe in clean air also; our families live here too, and we believe this board has to move forward," said Tricia Stever of the Tulare County Farm Bureau, representing more than 3,000 farmers.

To meet federal standards by 2024, the air district staff proposed a plan that includes \$20 billion in equipment replacement and other industry costs, and incentive funds for new technology.

The San Joaquin district had the second-highest number of ozone violation days in the nation last year, after Greater Los Angeles.

The decision was made the same day that the American Lung Assn. released its annual air quality report card.

It showed that although smog and soot pollution have improved in recent years across the country, Los Angeles and Riverside counties still have the worst overall air pollution in the nation.

### **Calif. air regulators vote to postpone San Joaquin smog cleanup**

By GARANCE BURKE, Associated Press Writer

Lodi News Sentinel, SF Chronicle, Tracy Press, Modesto Bee, Contra Costa Times and other papers, May 1, 2007

San Joaquin Valley air regulators voted Monday to approve a plan asking the government for an 11-year extension to bring the region's smog-laden air in line with federal standards.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District proposed extending the clean-up until 2023 to avoid federal sanctions that could cut off more than \$2 billion in federal transportation funds to the region.

The district's governing board approved the plan in a 9-2 vote Monday evening, after hearing eight hours of testimony from dozens of air quality experts, business leaders and clean air activists.

"There is not silver bullet out there," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director. "If money were no object, there is no other plan that could get us to clean air faster."

The California Air Resources Board must approve the proposal before forwarding it to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by June 15.

The valley, stretching from 240 miles from Stockton to Bakersfield, is one of the dirtiest air basins in the nation for emissions that create ozone, the main ingredient of smog.

In February, a Los Angeles-area firm that consults on air pollution projects in Mexico City, released a report claiming the district could lower the bulk of ozone emissions in the valley within the original 2013 deadline set by the federal government.

"I have a 2-year-old son. It breaks my heart to think that I have to be careful to let him go outside," said councilmember Raji Brar, who voted against the plan. "This is America. It doesn't fit with me well that we can't do anything else."

## **Valley again holds top pollution spots in Lung Association report**

By Barbara Anderson / The Fresno Bee

Tuesday, May 1, 2007

San Joaquin Valley cities and counties again flunked an annual air-quality report card made public today by the American Lung Association.

The Valley has dominated the State of the Air report card for ozone pollution each of its eight years.

This year, four Valley cities rank among the Top 10 smoggiest regions in the nation.

The report card is a reminder that "the quality of our air remains an urgent issue," said Kim Thompson, air quality director for the Fresno-Madera Medical Society.

But there were some signs of slight improvement in the lung association's 2007 report.

Los Angeles -- which had fewer bad-air days than in previous years -- edged Bakersfield for the most ozone-polluted city in the country.

The Visalia-Porterville area retained its rank as third-smoggiest in the nation, and Fresno-Madera remained in fourth place.

Merced improved from fifth-worst to sixth place. And Hanford-Corcoran tied with Modesto for 13th-most polluted, as compared to the 11th place held by the Kings County region last year.

None of the six counties from Merced to Tulare received a passing grade for ozone. And only Merced passed for pollution from tiny sooty particles.

"For all six counties to have failing grades -- it's horrible," said Michelle Garcia, program manager for the Fresno office of the American Lung Association of California.

The Valley's bowl shape creates a perfect home for pollutants that are held captive by hot, windless summers and stagnant, foggy winters.

The Valley slightly improved its ranking for particle pollution, tiny specks of dust, soot and chemicals. But overall, it failed that report card, too.

The lung association separated its grades on particle pollution into short-term and long-term.

To calculate short-term particle pollution, the lung association looked at the maximum daily, 24-hour concentrations of particles.

Grading for year-round particles was based on annual violations of the federal air quality standards.

Fresno County ranked fourth for short-term particle pollution and was 15th-most polluted year-round. Last year, the county was third-worst in short-term and seventh in the long-term.

Los Angeles led the country in year-round particle pollution, followed by Pittsburgh and Bakersfield.

Last year, Bakersfield was No. 4.

The Visalia-Porterville area was No. 7 on the year-round list, improving from sixth place last year.

And Merced fell off both particle lists for the first time.

The lung association used air-quality data collected by the federal Environmental Protection Agency for three years from 2003 to 2005 to grade cities and counties. A pollution ranking for an area was arrived at by a weighted average calculated from the Air Quality Index, a government health-based rating system for different levels of pollution.

Ozone can inflame and scar lungs. And some research suggests long-term exposure can hamper lung development in children.

A spike in tiny particles has been linked to premature deaths, increased heart attacks, strokes and asthma attacks.

Results of the lung association report card didn't surprise Valley doctors, who said they witness the effects of air quality on their patients year-round.

In the summer and early fall, corrosive ground-level ozone hangs over Valley cities, while in the late fall and winter, microscopic particles hug the surface.

"We can lower people's cholesterol down to very low levels and we can reduce blood pressure ... but the risk to the heart and lungs from the air pollution, we can't fix that problem," said Dr. Donald Gaede, a

Fresno vascular medicine specialist.

Breathing sooty air is "probably a bigger risk factor than obesity," said Dr. John Telles, a Fresno cardiologist.

**S.J. breathes easier on smog  
But county's 'report card' still has an F**  
By Alex Breitler, Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Even with an F on its report card, San Joaquin County earns higher air-quality marks than some of its neighbors.

In its annual State of the Air score card, released today, the American Lung Association gave the county a C for ozone, or smog, and an F for short-term particulate matter, or soot -- the same grades San Joaquin County received last year.

The news comes one day after San Joaquin Valley air regulators, in an hours-long meeting in Fresno, debated a plan giving them more time to meet federal standards for ozone, a primary ingredient of smog.

"Too many Californians continue to breathe unhealthy air," said Tony Gerber, a physician and volunteer with the lung association. "The air is generally cleaner in California, ... but we must remain vigilant. Millions are still at risk."

While San Joaquin County's C might not impress, Sacramento and Stanislaus counties both got F's for ozone and were ranked as the No. 10 and No. 25 ozone-polluted counties in the nation, respectively. Even rural Calaveras County found its way onto that list, placing 24th.

Chemicals that spew from tailpipes, smokestacks and many other sources cook in the sunlight to form ozone.

Winds through the Delta likely help disperse San Joaquin's ozone, while geography traps it in other parts of the Valley and in the foothills, said Joel Schwartz, a Sacramento-based scientist who is a visiting fellow with the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

Schwartz is critical of the lung association's report. "Ozone varies a lot from place to place within a county," he said. "And yet, when they give an F to a county, they're giving an F to that entire county."

Also, the scorecard is based on data from 2003-05 - the most-reliable numbers, the association says, but not the newest. Ozone levels have dropped since 2005, and the air is generally cleaner, Schwartz said.

Association officials, however, draw a distinction between "clean" and "cleaner" and say there is much work to be done. They are pushing for a number of regulations targeting, among other things, the ships and trains that transfer goods to and from California's seaports.

San Joaquin County's F in particulate pollution could be traced to any number of things -- construction, agriculture, coal combustion, wildfires and dust -- the report says. The particles are a fraction of the size of a human hair and can irritate the lungs.

The F was based on 13 dirty days over the three-year span. By comparison, Riverside County's F is based on 159 such days.

San Joaquin County was given a passing grade for annual exposure to particulates.

Environmentalists have criticized the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's plan to extend to 2023 the amount of time needed to meet ozone standards. The critics say it can be done much sooner.

### **Report card**

Air-pollution grades issued today by the American Lung Association:

- San Joaquin County: C for ozone (smog); F for short-term particulate matter (soot); passing grade for yearly particulate matter standard
- Sacramento County: F for ozone; F for short-term particulate matter; passing grade for yearly particulate matter standard
- Stanislaus County: F for ozone; F for short-term particulate matter; passing grade for yearly particulate matter standard

- Calaveras County: F for ozone; A for short-term particulate matter; passing grade for yearly particulate matter standard

## **Report: Valley air gets poor rankings**

### **Good news: Fewer days with high ozone**

Ken Carlson

Modesto Bee, May 1, 2007

In the most recent air-quality report card issued by the American Lung Association, counties in the Northern San Joaquin Valley and the Sierra foothills again received poor marks.

But the counties had fewer days during which residents breathed bad air.

According to the association's "State of the Air: 2007" report, released Monday, Calaveras, Stanislaus and Merced counties failed the test for ozone-polluted air, and the latter two counties and San Joaquin County got failing grades for particle pollution. The report was based on 2003-2005 readings.

Stanislaus, Merced and Tuolumne counties had a significant drop in the number of days with unhealthy ozone, commonly known as smog. Stanislaus had 28 high-ozone days, compared with 47 days in the 2006 report. Merced County went from 125 to 67 high ozone days.

Tuolumne improved from an "F" grade to a "D" in ozone pollution.

Merced still was one of the most ozone-polluted cities in the nation, going from fifth place to sixth; Modesto held on to the 13th spot on the dubious list.

The Lung Association reported a drop in ozone pollution in California because of aggressive measures to cut emissions from motor vehicles and industrial plants. Despite the reduction in smog, the more dangerous pollution from soot and tiny dust particles was up slightly in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

"While the air is cleaner in California, it is not clean enough," said Andrew Weisser, a spokesman for the American Lung Association.

In the northern valley and foothills, the bad air put 295,000 residents at risk of heart disease and made 180,000 susceptible to lung ailments such as asthma and chronic bronchitis, the report said.

Overall, 26 counties in California failed the clean air test and only one city made it onto the group's clean air list — Salinas.

Los Angeles can continue being the butt of smog jokes — it again topped the association's list of most polluted cities in America.

The association found that the Los Angeles metropolitan area, which includes Long Beach and Riverside counties, had the worst ozone and particle pollution.

"Nobody is surprised that L.A. has an air pollution problem," said Janice Nolen, the association's assistant vice president for national policy and advocacy. "The problems there are one of the reasons we have the Clean Air Act. But it is important for folks to know that there has been some improvement."

The Pittsburgh area was ranked the nation's second most polluted metropolitan area, followed by Bakersfield, Birmingham, Ala., Detroit and Cleveland.

The organization based the rankings on ozone pollution levels produced when heat and sunlight come into contact with pollutants from power plants, cars, refineries and other sources. The group also studied particle pollution levels emitted from those sources, which are made up of a mix of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air.

Such pollution can contribute to heart disease, lung cancer and asthma attacks, the association said. Those especially vulnerable to polluted air are children, senior citizens, people who work or exercise outdoors and people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Nearly half of the U.S. population lives in counties that have unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution even though there appeared to be less ozone in many counties than previous years, the study found.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

### **POLLUTED POPULACE**

U.S. urban areas most polluted by year-round ozone and particle pollution:

1. Los Angeles-Long Beach Riverside
2. Pittsburgh-New Castle, Pa.
3. Bakersfield
4. Birmingham-Hoover-Cullman, Ala.
5. Detroit-Warren-Flint, Mich.
6. Cleveland-Akron-Elyria, Ohio
7. Visalia-Porterville
8. Cincinnati-Middletown, Ky.- Wilmington, Ind.
9. Indianapolis-Anderson-Columbus, Ind.
10. St. Louis-St.Charles, Mo.- Farmington, Ill.
11. (tie) Chicago-Naperville, Ind.- Michigan City, Wis.; Lancaster, Pa.
13. Atlanta-Sandy Springs, Ga.- Gainesville, Ala.
14. York-Hanover-Gettysburg, Pa.
15. (tie) Fresno-Madera; Weirton W.Va.-Steubenville, Ohio

Source: The American Lung Association

### **Smog better, particulates not, report says**

[Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer](#)

S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

The Bay Area, like most urban centers, has curbed smog yet failed to capture fine particle emissions, earning it the rank of the 15th most polluted region in the country on the American Lung Association's bad air list.

In a new air-quality report card, entitled "State of the Air: 2007," every one of the Bay Area's nine counties improved its levels of ground-level ozone, or smog. But they showed a greater number of "high particle pollution days," largely the result of old diesel trucks and buses still on the road and the use of fireplaces and woodstoves.

Urban areas nationwide are getting higher marks for reducing ozone, said Linda Weiner, director of research for the American Lung Association of California.

"The air is cleaner, but it's not clean enough," she said. "There is an ominous trend in terms of the short-term bursts of particle pollution. It's going up nationally, and we know it's very dangerous."

Particle pollution is a mix of very tiny solid and liquid particles. Health researchers say it can shorten lives, contribute to heart disease, lung cancer and asthma attacks and interfere with the growth and work of the lungs. High levels of ozone attack the lung tissue and can damage both pulmonary and cardiovascular systems, the report said.

In the report issued today, the Bay Area dropped from the 21st most polluted counties in the United States to the 15th. The nation's worst remain in California: Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Fresno and Kern.

San Francisco, Santa Clara and Contra Costa counties get a big fat "F" on the report card for particulate pollution, she said. In Santa Clara County, the high-particle pollution days jumped from 20 on the lung association's 2006 report card to 42 in 2007.

Jack Broadbent, director of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, said the failing grade for particulate pollution in some of the counties "reminds us we have to redouble our efforts."

He said the biggest challenges are in curbing the wood smoke from fireplaces and wood stoves. "We're going to need to look at regulation to curtail wood burning in the Bay Area, and that will be affecting the general public," he said.

The stagnant weather last winter brought on a slew of violations of federal regulations that were tightened in 2006. From November to February, the Bay Area exceeded the 24-hour standard for fine particles 20 times, according to the air-quality district.

Penalties are only issued after several years of repeated violations, and can result in the loss of federal funds.

Regulations have been proposed to control commercial charcoal broiling, and a public hearing has been set for May 16, said an agency spokeswoman, Karen Schkolnick. The staff is preparing regulations on residential wood burning, which will be presented to the public later this year. The air district board must adopt the final regulations.

The agency is giving out \$40 million to agencies and private businesses to replace and upgrade diesel engines in trucks and buses, forklifts, taxis and other mobile sources.

Santa Clara County offers incentives to those who switch fireplaces to natural gas fuel.

According to the report, nearly half of the U.S. population lives in counties that have unhealthy levels of either ozone or particle pollution. The number of people living in areas with unhealthy ozone only dropped significantly in a year from nearly half the population to one-third of the population, it said.

The reason for the drop in ozone is credited to favorable weather and lower emissions.

"In the West -- particularly in California -- continued aggressive measures to slice emissions from a wide range of air pollution sources contributed to fewer ozone days," the report said. Yet, public health officials agree that the federal allowable levels for ozone are too high. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering a new standard, and will have hearings later this year.

### **L.A. Tops List of Nation's Most Polluted**

NOAKI SCHWARTZ, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle, Hanford Sentinel, Tulare Advance-Register, Contra Costa Times, Visalia Times-Delta, Sacramento Bee and NY Times; and at MSNBC.com  
Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Los Angeles (AP) -- Los Angeles can continue being the butt of smog jokes now that it has once again topped the American Lung Association's bad air list of most polluted cities in America.

The association found that the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside metropolitan area had the worst air based on 2003 through 2005 figures.

The Pittsburgh area was ranked as the nation's second most polluted metropolitan area followed by Bakersfield, Calif., Birmingham, Ala., Detroit and Cleveland. Visalia, Calif., Cincinnati, Indianapolis and St. Louis rounded out the top 10.

The news wasn't all bad for Los Angeles. Despite the dubious distinction, the number of days residents breathed the nation's worst ozone levels was fewer than in previous years.

"Nobody is surprised that LA has an air pollution problem," said Janice Nolen, the association's assistant vice president for national policy and advocacy. "The problems there are one of the reasons we have the Clean Air Act. But it is important for folks to know that there has been some improvement."

The organization based the rankings on ozone pollution levels produced when heat and sunlight come into contact with pollutants from power plants, cars, refineries and other sources. The group also studied particle pollution levels emitted from these sources, which are made up of a mix of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air.

Such pollution can contribute to heart disease, lung cancer and asthma attacks, the association said. Those especially vulnerable to polluted air are children, senior citizens, people who work or exercise outdoors and people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Nearly half of the U.S. population lives in counties that still have unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution, even though there appeared to be less ozone in many counties than previous years, the study found.

### **Counties' air quality gets failing grade**

Bee Metro Staff

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Sacramento, El Dorado and Placer counties were among 26 California counties to receive a failing air quality grade in an American Lung Association report released today.

The Sacramento metropolitan area ranked among the nation's eight worst cities for ozone levels and 12th for 24-hour particulate pollution, the report said.

The Lung Association's "State of the Air: 2007" ranks cities and counties most polluted by ozone, 24-hour particle pollution, and annual particle pollution. In lists of the 25 worst U.S. counties for specific air problems, California has 16 with ozone pollution, nine with short-term particle pollution and seven with year-round particle pollution.

### **Southland air getting better but still bad**

#### **Lung association issues new report**

By Brad Greenberg, Staff Writer

LA Daily News Tues., May 1, 2007

Go ahead and breathe easier, but not too deeply.

The Southland's long-maligned air quality keeps getting better, but Los Angeles area residents are still sucking in the most polluted air in the nation, according to a report being released today.

The annual State of the Air report by the American Lung Association found that from 2003 to 2005, the L.A. metropolitan area continued to have the highest levels of ozone and particulate pollution.

But over the period, residents in the L.A. area - which in the study included Long Beach and Riverside - suffered from dangerously high pollution levels for fewer days of the year.

"We have a long way to go," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, assistant vice president of government relations for the association's California division. "We have daunting challenges in moving away from fossil fuels, in moving away from petroleum in our state."

"But we have been incredibly aggressive and innovative in improving our emissions."

### **Exposure widespread**

Despite such exaltations, California remains plagued by air pollution.

Twenty-six counties got an "F" in air quality - including all of Southern California. Only Salinas made the clean-cities list.

Nationwide, almost half of Americans were exposed during the three years reviewed to an unhealthful level of air pollution.

Ozone declined nationwide, while particulate pollution increased on the East Coast but fell on the West Coast, led by California's efforts.

Ozone, which causes the haze in photochemical smog, and particulate pollution - soot - are emitted by airplanes, cars, industry, refineries, power plants and the trucks and boats that flow in and out of L.A.'s ports.

During a conference call with reporters Monday, lung association officials emphasized the connection between bad air and health complications, such as respiratory problems and diabetes, and the need for stricter legislation to continue improving air quality.

"The science is clear. Air pollution shortens life spans," said Dr. Tony Gerber, a pulmonary specialist and lung association volunteer. "Although some progress has been made, we need to continue to push for stronger standards and better measures."

But critics of the report's tenor accused the lung association of understating advances.

"This year's report, as was the case with past years, exaggerates pollution levels, exaggerates health risks and downplays the great improvements in air quality over the past few years and past few decades," said Joel Schwartz, a visiting fellow specializing in air pollution at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute. "If you look at Los Angeles County, the improvement has been truly extraordinary."

In a separate report Monday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said a preliminary review of 2006 smog data, which the lung association did not include, showed continued improvement.

Since 1970, total emissions of key pollutants - nitrogen dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and lead - declined by more than 50 percent.

During the same period, the gross domestic product more than doubled, vehicle travel increased 77 percent and energy consumption was up almost 50 percent.

### **Weather, efforts help**

In its 212-page report, the lung association attributed improvements to better weather, though 2004 and 2005 were among the hottest years on record, to stricter emission standards and to individuals and organizations switching to alternative forms of energy, such as hybrid and biodiesel vehicles and wind and solar energy.

"Every little bit helps," said Keith Flanagan, 40, of Oxnard, who bought a Toyota Prius after leaving his Camarillo job for one in Woodland Hills.

Kevin Bognot and Christian Liquigan previously didn't worry about the air they breathed. But recently the seniors at James Monroe High School in North Hills completed a photo project comparing oil energy with renewable energy.

Suddenly, they started to see a problem.

"If we choose not to do anything about it," Liquigan said, "then we have no one to blame but ourselves."

### **L.A. area air called worst in nation**

#### **But O.C. pollution levels nothing to brag about.**

From Register staff and wire service reports

OC Register Tues., May 1, 2007

Los Angeles can continue being the butt of smog jokes, but inhaling in Orange County is hardly a breath of fresh air.

The Los Angeles metropolitan area, which includes Long Beach and Riverside County, was listed as having the nation's worst air, according to studies released Monday by the American Lung Association.

Though the Lung Association didn't include Orange County as part of the Los Angeles market, the group did give the county's air failing grades for ozone and particulate pollution.

Overall, 26 counties in California failed the clean air test for the years 2003 through 2005, and only one area made it onto the group's clean air list - the city of Salinas.

Orange County has cleaner air than other parts of Southern California because of wind patterns that push pollution from the beach area toward the Inland Empire.

"Orange County, of course, is responsible for a very large share of emissions from everything from vehicles to consumers to business and industry. But because of the prevailing winds, those emissions are typically carried elsewhere," said Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Orange County ranked 10th in the nation for short-term particulates, which aggravate respiratory problems.

The Pittsburgh area was ranked as the nation's second most-polluted metropolitan area, followed in order by Bakersfield, Birmingham, Ala., Detroit and Cleveland.

The news wasn't all bad for Los Angeles. Despite the dubious distinction, the number of days residents breathed the nation's worst ozone levels was less than in previous years.

"Nobody is surprised that L.A. has an air pollution problem," said Janice Nolen, the association's assistant vice president for national policy and advocacy. "The problems there are one of the reasons we have the Clean Air Act. But it is important for folks to know that there has been some improvement."

The organization based the rankings on ozone pollution levels produced when heat and sunlight come into contact with pollutants from power plants, cars, refineries and other sources. The group also studied particle pollution levels emitted from these sources, which are made up of a mix of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air.

Such pollution can contribute to heart disease, lung cancer and asthma attacks, the association said. Those especially vulnerable to polluted air are children, senior citizens, people who work or exercise outdoors and people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

"It's also important for people to know breathing bad air isn't good for anybody, including people who are healthy. It's not just people living with asthma or emphysema," said Andy Weisser, a spokesman for the lung association.

In addition to harming lungs, bad air also is linked to heart disease, premature births and birth defects.

Nearly half of all Americans live in counties that have unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. This is true even though the study found less ozone in many counties than in previous years.

## **Air quality trumps cozy hearth**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Friday, April 27, 2007

Three out of every four Bay Area residents support banning winter wood fires in fireplaces and stoves on dirty air nights, according to a poll commissioned by a pollution agency expected to vote on a burn rule later this year.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District now issues voluntary no-burn advisories on "Spare the Air" winter nights, when it expects tiny particle pollution to make the air unhealthy to breathe. The agency issued 30 such advisories last winter.

The poll result of 77 percent in favor of a mandatory no-burn rule has stoked momentum to take a stronger approach.

"I think this is the last log on the fire," said Mark Ross, a Martinez City Council member who heads the air district's board. "We're not allowing (oil) refineries to burn open flares without restrictions. Why should we allow hundreds or thousands of fireplaces in neighborhoods to have open burning on nights when the air is bad?"

Ross said that although some residents resent burning restrictions as a government intrusion, the poll shows that more people are fed up with chimney smoke and worried about its health effects.

Studies link fine particle pollution to a range of heart and respiratory ailments, including a higher risk of premature deaths among the sick and elderly. About 45 percent of Bay Area households have a wood-burning fireplace, stove or fireplace insert.

Sixty-four percent of those surveyed support prohibiting old-fashioned open-hearth fireplaces in new housing. About 40 percent of the cities in the Bay Area have such a rule, as do all Bay Area counties except for Napa.

A narrow majority of those surveyed, or 51 percent, support a rule requiring that when homes are sold, open-hearth fireplaces must be closed off or replaced with a cleaner-burning alternative such as EPA-certified fire inserts or stoves or ceramic logs heated by a gas flame.

Bay Area real estate sellers resisted such a proposal years ago, complaining that it would raise housing costs.

Ross, who sells real estate in his private job, said he believes it's time to move toward a point-of-sale restriction that would become effective in a few years.

He added, however, that he wants the district to provide financial incentives or subsidies to households that replace open-hearth fireplaces with cleaner-burning devices.

John Gioia, a Contra Costa County supervisor who also sits on the air district board, said he's undecided about a point-of-sale restriction, but he favors a wood-fire ban on bad-air nights.

"The poll shows there is support to push for a regulation more quickly," said Gioia, a Richmond resident.

The district poll conducted by True North Research Inc. of Encinitas in Southern California surveyed 988 Bay Area residents by phone from Dec. 2 through Feb 12. The poll margin of error was plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Air district administrators are developing a wood-burning rule for the 22-member board to consider.

A no-wood-fire rule on bad-air nights is in effect in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District, where offenders are fined \$50. The South Coast Air Quality Management District is considering a no-burn rule.

The Bay Area poll found 74 percent of those surveyed believe that wood smoke can have negative health effects. Three years earlier, 59 percent said smoke was harmful.

The pollsters also found that the public is cutting back on use of wood-burning devices.

About 17.6 percent of the households with fireplaces or stoves either chose not to burn at all last winter or refrained from burning at least one night because of air quality concerns, the pollsters reported. That figure was 2.4 percent in the previous winter, the pollsters found.

Air district officials acknowledged that stricter federal air quality standards for fine particle pollution greatly increased the wintertime "Spare the Air" advisories.

Although it issued 30 advisories last winter, the district issued none the previous winter, when the more lenient limit was in effect

"It's not that the air is getting dirtier," said Karen Schkolnick, an air district spokeswoman. "We have a better understanding of the health impacts associated with smoke and other particulates."

## **Court adheres to 2003 clean air rules**

By PETE YOST Associated Press Writer  
Contra Costa Times, Monday, April 30, 2007

WASHINGTON- The Supreme Court on Monday dealt the utility industry its second setback this month on a program designed to clean up pollution at aging, coal-fired power plants.

The justices refused to review Bush administration standards favored by the companies and blocked a year ago by some state and local regulators and environmental groups.

The court's action, however, is undercut by a new Bush administration regulatory proposal that would relax clean air standards at coal-fired plants. Environmental groups say the rule, if adopted, would give the industry what it could not win in the courts.

The court's action Monday leaves in place a March 2006 court decision that went against both the Bush administration and the utility industry. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia declared Environmental Protection Agency regulations were so lenient that they violated the Clean Air Act.

The 2003 EPA rules on a program called New Source Review would allow older coal-fired facilities to undergo extensive changes without having to install pollution controls.

The office of then-New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer led the fight against the 2003 regulations in the lower courts, saying the Bush administration was trying to "gut" federal clean air law.

Last week, the Bush administration issued its latest proposal. It would undercut an April 2 Supreme Court decision and the court's decision Monday not to consider the 2003 EPA rules.

In the April 2 decision, the court ruled against Duke Energy Corp., which has been resisting regulators' demands to install pollution controls in units in North and South Carolina. The Duke ruling impacts other pending Clinton-era enforcement cases against several utilities.

The cases are EPA v. New York, 06-736, and Utility Air Regulatory Group v. New York, 06-750.

## **Emissions Proposal Mowed Over**

By Cindy Skrzycki  
The Washington Post  
Tuesday, May 1, 2007; Page D01

It's the classic scent and scene of summer: a freshly mowed, neatly trimmed lawn.

Lawn lovers may not realize, however, that push-power mowers spew as much pollution in an hour as 11 cars can, and riding mowers emit as much as 34 cars. On top of that, Americans are using power lawn and garden equipment about 3 billion hours a year to get that clipped look.

Though outdoor-equipment makers have been subject to regulation and have reduced emissions, the Environmental Protection Agency and California wanted more stringent rules for the \$8 billion industry. This meant that to achieve further reductions in pollutants, engine makers would probably have to use catalytic converters to clean up exhaust.

The effort, which promised substantial progress in cutting smog, was mowed down by Briggs & Stratton, a major small-engine manufacturer in Wauwatosa, Wis., and its congressional patron, Sen. Christopher S. Bond (R-Mo.). Once the company and Congress got involved, the regulatory path took more twists and turns than a riding mower on a steep embankment.

As battles over rules go, this one had an unusually high level of congressional meddling and corporate resolve, said Frank O'Donnell, president of Clean Air Watch, a nonprofit group based in Washington.

The quarrel over the next stage of regulation began in 2003, when it looked as if California would take the lead.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, California has authority to set its own air-pollution rules as long as federal regulators approve. That's because the state had its own emissions law in effect before the federal law was passed in 1970. Other states then could opt in to the California standards, which looked as if they might be more stringent than the federal plan.

Federal regulators met fierce opposition from Briggs & Stratton, the world's largest producer of lawnmower engines, and Bond of Missouri, where the company has two plants.

Briggs & Stratton said if California and other states required catalytic converters, the company would have to do a major retooling, likely leading to the loss of jobs and the building of cheaper plants offshore.

Thomas R. Savage, senior vice president of administration for Briggs & Stratton, said the company hired a Washington lobbyist and turned to Bond after it failed to get much sympathy from California regulators.

"We were having a hard time getting anyone in California to listen," said Savage. The company preferred to have the EPA regulate the engines, which would eliminate having to report to two regulatory "masters."

In 2003 and 2005, Bond, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, got legislation passed that allowed California to implement its own rule -- but preempted other states from following its lead. At the same time, the EPA was required to issue a rule covering engines with less than 50 horsepower.

There was further delay in 2005, when Congress ordered a study to determine whether catalytic converters were a fire hazard. The Consumer Product Safety Commission was asked to weigh in.

California got federal approval of its rule in 2006, and a study was completed on possible fire hazards created by the new technology. The EPA issued a 280-page proposal last month that would cover about 10 million pieces of engine-powered lawn and garden equipment sold annually as well as recreational watercraft.

Under the proposal, emissions of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide for lawnmowers, leaf blowers, chain saws and weed whackers would be cut by 35 percent, costing industry from \$9.5 million in 2008 to \$620 million in 2037, according to the agency. Public health benefits by 2030 would be \$3.4 billion because of a reduction in premature deaths, hospitalizations and lost work days.

The agency is taking comments on the proposal until Aug. 3; it plans a final rule in 2008.

"Everyone wins with a federal rule," said William M. Guerry Jr., counsel to the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, a trade group representing engine and equipment manufacturers. Guerry said manufacturers would be able to comply with the rule because they have enough lead time to make products that don't pose fire risks.

Margo T. Oge, director of the EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality, says the proposal would be as tough as the California rule. Oge said several engine manufacturers told the agency

in 2005 that they could safely meet the California rule, signaling there was industry support beyond Briggs & Stratton for a federal rule.

State regulators complained that compliance dates, set for 2011 and 2012, are too long. States and environmental groups consider it a loss of states' rights that they will be prevented from following California's lead in regulating small engines.

"We lost our opportunity to opt into California now or in the future," said S. William Becker, executive director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, which represents air pollution-control agencies in 53 states and territories. "If EPA decides not to change the rules for 20 years, that's it, we're stuck."

Savage said Briggs & Stratton is resolved to accept the outcome because it doesn't want California having the authority to regulate small engines. "We studied the issue long and hard and ultimately concluded we could continue to fight or say, 'Let's see if we can't get some time here,' " he said.

Bond is satisfied, too.

"Contrary to California's ready-fire-aim approach in this area, EPA's deliberate and thoughtful process has considered safety concerns . . . and technology-feasibility concerns raised by parts manufacturers," Bond said. He said because the agency and California moderated their positions, engine production will continue in Missouri.

That will be at only one plant, however.

Despite the company's success in the regulatory arena, it recently announced the closure of one engine factory, in Rolla, eliminating 500 jobs.

Savage said the company had "duplicate capacity" since it built a facility in China.

*Cindy Skrzycki is a regulatory columnist for Bloomberg News. She can be reached at [cskrzycki@bloomberg.net](mailto:cskrzycki@bloomberg.net) <<mailto:cskrzycki@bloomberg.net>>.*

## **Chevron criticized about flaring**

**RICHMOND: Activists say refinery's pollution is outgrowth of poor performance from its equipment**

By Mike Taugher

Contra Costa Times, Monday, April 1, 2007

RICHMOND -- The Bay Area's largest refinery is not doing enough to limit pollution from open flares, community activists charged Monday.

During a public hearing on Chevron's plan to limit flaring from its Richmond refinery, activists compared what they said was a significant increase in flaring emissions there to other refineries in the region that they say have done a better job.

In a recent report, the activist group Communities for a Better Environment said Chevron was performing worse than Shell's refinery in Martinez.

"Chevron doesn't have as much equipment (to reduce flaring), and they don't operate within the limits of that equipment. That's why they have the flaring," said Greg Karras, a senior scientist at the environmental group.

Chevron, however, says it has reduced flaring.

The company and the activists analyzed the data differently.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which is expected to consider the Chevron flare plan for possible approval this summer, says it is too soon to draw any conclusions.

But, the district said, flaring at the region's five refineries has declined in recent years.

Fluctuations in the amount of flaring at individual refineries can be attributed to maintenance schedules. Chevron has performed significant periodic maintenance since the air district began gathering flare data less than three years ago, said Wayne Kino, a district enforcement manager.

Until regulators start seeing patterns such as when the same units fail and cause flaring, it will be hard to detect a real trend, Kino said.

"We're looking for long-term gains in emissions," Kino said.

Karras, however, said Shell has also performed such maintenance and was still able to reduce flaring.

Tery Lizarraga, the refinery's health, safety and environment manager, said flaring from malfunctions and other problems at the Chevron refinery has declined.

And she said the company was reducing flaring from maintenance.

More than 100 people attended the Monday hearing, and most of those who spoke as of press time commented favorably on the refinery's plans. Several cited an increased level of cooperation among Chevron, regulators and the community.

But one critic said it was too early for reconciliation.

Henry Clark, director of the West County Toxics Coalition, noted that it was heavy pressure from Richmond activists that convinced state regulators to force the air district to crack down on flaring several years ago.

"It was not goodwill on the part of Chevron and the air district," Clark said. "It was this community that prodded the air district to come up with a flare minimization plan."

Flares are used at refineries to prevent explosions. When excess gas and pressure build up within a refinery, those gases are routed through flares. The gases are ignited by a pilot light and incinerated to reduce harmful emissions.

But the emissions from the flares are still a health concern, and because they were historically unregulated, refineries did not always invest in equipment that could reduce the need for flaring.

The flare plans are required under regulations adopted in 2005 by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District that were the first in the nation to address flaring.

Each of the five plans is open for public comment until the end of May.

The number of days of significant flaring has declined from just over 300 per year to 100 from 2004 to 2006, according to the district.

"It has reduced emissions. We are very pleased with the results so far," said Karen Schkolnick, a spokeswoman for the air district.

Schkolnick said no other regulatory agency has followed the Bay Area and adopted regulations.

"I would hope other communities would look to our model," she said.

## **Sulfuric acid plant in Martinez to get retooled**

Contra Costa Times, Friday, April 28, 2007

Sulfuric acid manufacturer Rhodia Inc. will pay a \$2 million penalty and spend \$50 million on air pollution controls at eight production plants in four states, including a plant in Martinez, to resolve allegations that the company violated the federal Clean Air Act.

Rhodia's plants produce sulfuric acid by burning compounds containing sulfur, creating sulfur dioxide, which is then converted to sulfur trioxide, which combines with water to form sulfuric acid. Air pollution is created when unconverted sulfur dioxide and sulfuric acid mist are released to the atmosphere.

The government's complaint alleges that Rhodia modified its plants, increasing emissions of sulfur dioxide, without first obtaining preconstruction permits and installing required pollution control equipment.

To meet these limits, the company will install state-of-the-art pollution control equipment at several plants and change operating procedures at several others.

## **Air monitoring begins near Pacific Steel**

### **Casting plant agrees to change one ingredient in process and install control device in an effort to reduce pollution**

By Doug Oakley, MEDIANEWS STAFF  
Contra Costa Times, Friday, April 27, 2007

In an attempt to prove that Pacific Steel Casting in Berkeley is showering nearby residents with dangerous heavy metals, a San Francisco group has started monitoring air around the Second Street plant.

Meanwhile, the plant has agreed to change an ingredient in its steel-making process, a switch that should reduce pollution coming out of its stacks by two tons a year, said Adrienne Bloch, staff attorney at Communities for a Better Environment, which sued the steel foundry in federal court last year over violations of the Clean Air Act.

Bloch said Pacific Steel agreed to change a binder used in sand that forms castings into which molten metal is poured. When that binder gets hot, it releases a smelly emission that Pacific Steel believes is to blame for most of its complaints.

Pacific Steel also plans to install a new pollution-control device on one of its older plants that should further reduce emissions, said Bloch. The measures resulted from a settlement of the lawsuit that mandated the plant set up a committee of union members, plant managers and Communities for a Better Environment representatives to talk about how it can reduce pollution.

"They are taking the settlement very seriously, but there are a lot of things that still need to be done," said Bloch.

Pacific Steel spokeswoman Elisabeth Jewel declined to comment on either the air-monitoring project or the two measures the plant is taking to reduce pollution.

While the plant applies for permits from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to change its steel-making process, community members are now monitoring the air around the plant through a project funded with a \$25,000 air district grant. The equipment and procedures used to monitor the air have the agency's blessing as a credible scientific undertaking, said air district spokeswoman Karen Schkolnick.

On Monday, Global Community Monitor of San Francisco placed a machine atop the home of Berkeley resident Richard Spencer, who lives about four blocks from Pacific Steel, to start taking 24-hour readings.

"We have a long history of complaints related to Pacific Steel," said Schkolnick. "There's been a relationship built over time with the community, and this grant came out of that in addition to the other enforcement and litigation we are pursuing as a comprehensive (pollution-reduction) strategy."

Schkolnick said the district is in the process of installing a permanent air-monitoring device near Pacific Steel but added that it could take years to get it running.

Denny Larson, director of Global Community Monitor, said he wants to use data collected from the air samples to show that Pacific Steel is endangering the health of the community.

"We think Pacific Steel is a serious community health problem in Berkeley, and we want to assign the proper blame to them, which we think is quite large," Larson said. "We're very dissatisfied with the denial the company is exhibiting on this issue. They are spending a lot of money on public relations rather than cleaning up their act."

Larson said the air monitoring will be done in 24-hour increments for about four months at eight or 10 other locations in Berkeley. He said he is looking for "marker" metals that he and the air district have identified as specific to Pacific Steel.

Schkolnick said the district will look at the information from the monitoring but "it's a little premature to say if it will be used for enforcement."

Community Activist L-A Wood, who is helping with the monitoring, said the air district is giving the air-monitoring job to a nonprofit group "because it gets (the air district) off the hook. That works for them. Sometimes they have other people do what they can't or won't do."

Spencer, who volunteered the roof of his home for the monitoring device, said he did so because he's worried about his health. He and his son suffer headaches and have trouble sleeping at night, and he thinks the plant's emissions are the reason. The blasts of toxic smell that hit him at different times have driven him to get tested for the presence of heavy metals in his body.

Spencer showed the lab results of a test taken from his hair that showed he is in the 95th percentile for the "potentially toxic elements" of bismuth, cadmium, silver and tin.

"I thought about moving away, but how far do you have to move?" said Spencer. "If I walk around the corner here, immediately I am assailed. The smell comes in blasts, but it is not sustained. The smell suggests toxicity. And the company has been recalcitrant in divulging what those blasts contain."

## **Loss of connectors costs area millions every day 'Economic impact (of closure) will be huge'**

By Janis Mara, STAFF WRITER

Tri-Valley Herald, May 1, 2007

Inside Bay Area Sunday's fireball freeway crash will have a "significant" economic impact on the Bay Area, industry experts said, with estimates ranging from \$4 million to \$6 million per day while the freeway is under repair.

Early estimates suggest that repairs would take at least two months, though many say this estimate is on the low side.

"There was a significant impact during the 1989 quake when the Bay Bridge was closed," said Robert Ramorino, first vice president of the California Trucking Association and head of Hayward-based RoadStar Trucking Inc. "There's going to be an economic effect because there will be delays and more fuel will be burned."

Ramorino said he couldn't give hard numbers, but Christopher Knittel, a researcher at the University of California, Davis, Institute of Transportation Studies, took an educated guess.

"Let's say the median yearly wage in the Bay Area is around \$60,000, or \$30 an hour," said Knittel, an associate professor of economics. "About 270,000 vehicles drive over the Bay Bridge every day. Let's assume every one of those drivers adds another half-hour to his or her commute, or \$15 an hour. That's about \$4 million a day.

"And that's assuming there's just one person in the car."

A higher estimate came from the Bay Area Council, a business advocacy organization.

Using a 2006 economic impact study that projected the impact of a monthlong Bay Bridge shutdown, the council extrapolated the impact of the shutdown of interstates 580 and 880, affected by Sunday's tanker fire.

Bay Area Council spokesman John Grubb said the council projected a \$180 million economic loss for a single month, which translates to \$6 million a day.

"The economic impact will be huge," agreed Henry Gardner, executive director of the Association of Bay Area Governments. "We know we have very congested freeways when everything is

working," he added, and the loss of one of the area's major arteries will only worsen the congestion.

"Moving people is absolutely critical to any function in the economy, and to the extent people are not able to move goods and services, there will be less productivity, worse [air quality](#) with cars idling on freeways and rising frustration," Gardner said.

The economic impacts are more likely to affect businesses than individuals, Gardner acknowledged, but business impacts "ultimately affect individuals."

Still, Ramorino and others, including a Port of Oakland spokeswoman, were hopeful the economic impact would be blunted, citing Monday's light traffic and the resourcefulness of trucking companies, safety officers and Bay Area commuters as factors that might minimize the crash's economic cost.

"I think the motoring public is going to step up to the plate and those who can use BART and other forms of public transit will do so," Ramorino said. "Trucking companies all over the Bay are figuring out alternative routes and schedules. We're used to it."

Ramorino said his company's first truck routinely departs the office at 2 a.m. and the last one leaves at 6 a.m. to circumvent rush hour traffic.

Port of Oakland spokeswoman Marilyn Sandifur said movement of goods has not yet been affected by the interstate problems.

"We have four access routes to the port, and three of them are still accessible," she said Monday. "Traffic has been moving well today."

One reason things went smoothly Monday is because peak season hasn't started yet, Sandifur said. Peak season begins in another month, she said, and things could change when volume goes up.

A big question is the damage to the westbound Interstate 80 connector ramp to Interstate 880, Sandifur said. "Worst-case scenario would be if they have to rebuild that westbound 80 connector ramp," Sandifur said. "But we still have multiple access points."

About 1,500 truck drivers use the port area on a daily basis, she said, and most of them work within a 500-mile radius of the port.

Others adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

"Long-term implications are unclear, though we know of course there will be some traffic impacts," said Bob Canter, chief executive of Emeryville's Chamber of Commerce. The tiny East Bay city was at ground zero for the crash.

Canter said the chamber is sending information on public transit options to major Emeryville employers.

Meanwhile, a handful of workers seemed to take the disruption in stride — at least for now.

"Everything went well with my morning commute today," said Nestor Madlang, who takes a bus and a train to work in Oakland from Vallejo. "And it was free." Madlang drove to San Francisco around 11 a.m. Sunday and had no problems, he said. When he drove back around 2 p.m., "there were routing instructions (for the detour) and it was fine."

Abdul Amin had no problem with his commute — but that's not surprising, given that he drove to work in Oakland from his home in the same city on Golf Links Road.

Business writers Barbara Grady and Francine Brevetti contributed to this report. Contact Janis Mara at [jmara@angnewspapers.com](mailto:jmara@angnewspapers.com) or (510) 208-6468.

**Not so nice a day in West Oakland**  
**Grand Avenue becomes detour destination for interchange traffic**

By Angela Woodall and Doug Fischer, STAFF WRITERS  
Tri-Valley Herald, May 1, 2007

OAKLAND — It could have been a lot worse — the traffic, that is.

The nightmare onslaught of jam-packed roadways, enraged motorists and baffled drivers failed to materialize on Day 1 after the destruction early Sunday of the busiest interchange in Northern California.

But it wasn't a bed of roses, especially on city streets around West Grand Avenue shortly before peak evening rush-hour time.

Car after car stretched as far as the eye could see about 4:45 p.m. along West Grand, turning a lightly traveled truck route into a busy thoroughfare. Cars poured off the West Grand exit from Interstate 80 that is being used as a major detour for drivers trying to reach Highway 24 or eastbound Interstate 580.

The commute from San Francisco was "quite nice" because so few drivers were out, said Anna Quinones.

Her daily drive home along West Grand, however, was a "pain in the (butt)," she added, using a slightly saltier adjective, because of the traffic.

"It's heavier for sure," said Dave Turner, who lives two blocks from West Grand and Mandela Parkway — the eye of the detour.

Usually, there are no more than five cars at the stoplight even at rush hour, Turner said, adding he was surprised it wasn't more backed up.

Those in West Oakland say the detour along Grand Avenue represents a significant environmental injustice residents will bear the brunt of.

The detour will funnel tens of thousands of commuters headed for high-dollar

homes in the hills and suburbs through the streets of a struggling, low-income neighborhood already beset by heavy truck traffic and poor air quality, community activists said Monday.

It will clog neighborhood streets with cars and trucks, fill the air with diesel and gasoline engine emissions, decrease the area's "walkability" and quality of life, activists said.

"We declared a state of emergency to help commuters get back and forth, but that does very little to help the people in West Oakland," said Brian Bezeridge, co-chairman of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project.

The concern is that traffic, once backed up on West Grand, will not stay there, racing instead down side streets and through neighborhoods to beat the backup.

"Can you put 100,000 cars on two lanes of traffic ... moving at 3 mph?" Bezeridge asked. "People are very quickly going to learn how to circumvent that. ... At Mandela (Parkway) they're going to go every which way like cockroaches when you flip on the light switch."

Community activists also expressed dismay West Grand became the designated detour seemingly without much thought to other alternatives. The Bay Bridge's month-long closure during 1989 Loma Prieta forced commuters to find another way entirely into the city.

"Commuters have options for how they get in and out of the city. West Oakland residents really don't have any other option for where they live," said Swati Prakash, project manager for Oakland's Pacific Institute.

MediaNews staff writers Kristin Bender, George Kelly, Malaika Fraley, Alan Lopez and Peter Hegarty contributed to this report. Wire services also contributed to this report.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Tuesday, May 1, 2007:](#)

## **Not a list we want to top**

**Despite some progress, report shows we still have bad air here.**

The American Lung Association has released its annual "State of the Air" report and -- to no one's surprise -- Fresno and other Valley cities and counties are near the top of the list for the worst ozone and particle pollution in the nation.

It's more evidence that despite the progress we've made, we have a great deal left to do before we all breathe cleaner air. There have been significant legislative efforts. Many new regulations are in place governing emissions of all sorts; more are in our future. Perhaps most important, awareness of our air quality problems has grown enormously. That's crucial, because we're all going to have to make some pretty major changes in our habits if we are to have clean air some day.

The news isn't entirely bleak in the Lung Association report, but neither is it cause for celebration. Ozone pollution is declining nationally, as it has in the Valley in recent years. But "better" isn't the same thing as "good." And the report found that particle pollution is on the rise in the eastern part of the country, though it has dropped some in the West.

That's small comfort to people in the Valley. A look at the report shows why.

Los Angeles is at the top of the list of cities with the worst ozone pollution. It's followed by a roster of familiar names: Bakersfield, Visalia-Porterville, Fresno-Madera, Merced, Sacramento, Hanford-Corcoran and Modesto.

San Bernardino County has the nation's worst ozone problem. Riverside County is the worst in particle pollution. Three other California counties appear on all three lists of worst polluted: Los Angeles, Fresno and Kern. Fourteen of the 25 counties with the worst ozone pollution are in California.

Other bits from the report:

People at highest risk of short-term PM 2.5 pollution live in Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside; Pittsburgh and Fresno-Madera. Fresno-Madera is 15th on the national list for long-term risk from PM 2.5, the smallest and most damaging particle pollution.

Those at the greatest risk from ozone pollution live in Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Visalia-Porterville and Fresno-Madera. Merced ranks sixth.

Some California cities managed to reduce particle pollution and improved their place on the list of most polluted year-round. They include Visalia-Porterville, Fresno-Madera and Hanford-Corcoran. Merced dropped off the list for the first time.

In other words, despite some progress, things are still bad. We have a very long way to go for cleaner air.

[Guest commentary in the Contra Costa Times, Friday, April 27, 2007:](#)

### **Could some foreign pollution be in the air?**

SNEEZES, SNIFFLES, sore throats, coughs and itchy eyes have been very evident around the Lafayette Reservoir and throughout our region of late. Many of us are chalking it up to seasonal allergies, or allergic rhinitis, triggered by locally released pollens of trees, grasses and weeds.

No doubt these culprits are responsible for many of the symptoms. But there are additional provocateurs. And they may have traveled a great distance before wrecking havoc here.

Pollution spewed in Asia can be transported by wind across the Pacific Ocean and settle on our shores and in our streams. Massive dust storms in Asia every spring can lift up soil and aerosols to altitudes several miles high where they may be carried by swift winds to North America.

Aerosols are released from coal-burning power plants, coal-fired transportation, heavy industry and overtilled agricultural land. The toxic microscopic particles can travel the atmosphere from Asia to reach California within five days and may include trace elements of nickel, copper, zinc, iron, arsenic, lead and mercury in addition to sulfur and carbon dioxides.

Chinese environmental officials concede that air pollution produced there could quadruple in the next 15 years as a result of expanding energy consumption and enormous increases in private car ownership. While China has the biggest footprint, the pollution contributions of India and other Asian areas are certainly not insignificant.

There are established relationships between aerosols and rates of illness in people and animals. Crop destruction and reduced yields are also associated with pollution. Some trace metals, such as mercury, can build up in the food chain and seem to affect fish in particular. Pollution is a beast in motion; it is not a static problem.

Particulate matter we encounter at the Lafayette Reservoir could have its origins in Asia, but more likely was kicked up off Highway 24 vehicle emissions and tire fragments, wood-burning fires and barbecues, or from local construction, demolition and refineries. Not to mention the pollens and mold that occur naturally.

What we breathe at the Res is probably of better quality than what we breathe in our back yards, downtown or in a parking lot. We don't have a lot of choice about breathing, so unless sniffles, coughs and itchy eyes wear you down, we might as well breathe deeply around the reservoir. Lisa Libby Albert has been walking and observing the "res" for many years. She can be reached at [albertwrites@sbcglobal.net](mailto:albertwrites@sbcglobal.net).

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the 11-year extension requested by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. For more information, contact Maricela at (559) 230-5849.

### **Autoridades ambientales del Valle de San Joaquín piden extensión de once años contra contaminación**

**Controladores de la contaminación en el Valle, una de las zonas más afectadas por el deterioro ambiental en Estados Unidos aprobaron por nueve votos contra dos la solicitud a la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental**

Noticiero Latino, Fresno, California  
Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, May 1, 2007

La Oficina de Control de la Contaminación del Aire en el valle de San Joaquín, en California decidió por amplia mayoría de votos pedir a la administración del presidente George W. Bush una extensión de once años para cumplir metas de saneamiento ambiental debido al marcado deterioro en la región.

Controladores de la contaminación en el Valle, una de las zonas más afectadas por el deterioro ambiental en Estados Unidos aprobaron por nueve votos contra dos la solicitud a la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental, conocida como EPA, por sus siglas en inglés.

Los funcionarios de EPA establecieron que requerirán mantener un programa propio de control a la contaminación que ya sentó precedentes nacionales por lo menos hasta el año 2024, para determinar que el Valle quede libre de riesgos a la salud humana y con preservación ambiental.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Asthma Is a Small World... Asthma Impacts of Air Pollution conference by South Coast Air Quality Management District. For more information, contact Maricela at (559) 230-5849.

### **Pacto por el derecho al aire limpio**

**Científicos reunidos en California abogan por los pacientes asmáticos**

Alejandro Cano  
La Opinión, Friday, April 28, 2007

ANAHEIM.— Con el objetivo de reducir el índice de pacientes con asma en el mundo entero, expertos firmaron ayer en Anaheim el Acuerdo Internacional de los Derechos de Aire Limpio durante la conferencia denominada Asthma Is a Small World... Asthma Impacts of Air Pollution.

El tratado apoyado por el gobernador Arnold Schwarzenegger incluye normas que deben ser obedecidas por empresas en todo el planeta para reducir el nivel de emisiones de partículas que contaminan la atmósfera.

El acuerdo vigilará que las personas que están expuestas a la contaminación con mayor frecuencia, reciban justicia ambiental.

"Todos merecemos respirar aire limpio; es nuestra responsabilidad asegurarnos de que las compañías limpien lo que ensucian y que se hagan responsables para reducir el número de niños que padecen ataques de asma", expresó Schwarzenegger.

El pacto también indica que respirar aire puro no es un privilegio sino un derecho que tiene todo ser humano, y que todo individuo tiene la obligación de proteger a los suyos de la contaminación que pueden desarrollar enfermedades respiratorias como alergias y asma.

"En California se necesita una reforma para que todos los residentes tengan acceso a cuidados de salud y para que las compañías aseguradoras cesen de rechazar a pacientes asmáticos", indicó Schwarzenegger.

El Distrito de Administración de Calidad del Aire (AQMD) estima que hay más de 300 millones de pacientes con asma en el mundo y que 20 millones viven en Estados Unidos. Según datos, en California radican 4.5 millones de pacientes con asma, lo que equivale a un costo estimado de 1,400 millones de dólares anuales en tratamientos para el estado.

Pese a que con tratamiento adecuado el asma puede ser controlado, cada año mueren más de 500 personas en el estado. Complicaciones de la enfermedad hospitalizan a más de 40 mil personas anualmente, lo que equivale a la pérdida de 14 millones de días hábiles escolares.

Según reportes médicos, las personas de origen hispano están expuestas a la enfermedad con mayor frecuencia ya que 80% de ellos radican en áreas donde el nivel de emisiones de contaminantes es más elevado.

Se estima que a nivel nacional mueren 11 personas al día por complicaciones relacionadas con ataques asmáticos. Tan sólo el año pasado se registraron cuatro mil muertes en Estados Unidos, de los cuales más de la mitad fueron niños. Los números se han doblado comparado con estadísticas registradas en 1980 cuando el total de muertes relacionadas con el asma era de dos mil por año.

En respuesta al creciente problema, AQMD reunió a decenas de científicos y expertos de los cinco continentes, incluyendo Wan Tan, catedrático de la Universidad British Columbia en Canadá; Nino Kuenzli, investigador del Centro Epidemiológico Ambiental de España; Sow-Hsong Kuo, profesor de la Universidad Nacional de Taiwán; y Matiana Ramírez Aguilar, doctora de Ciencias Comisión de Evidencia y Manejo de Riesgos de México.

AQMD afirmó que está vigilando los niveles tóxicos de uno de los estados más contaminados en Estados Unidos.

AQMD actualmente elimina el uso de diesel en camiones de transporte, barredoras y camiones de basura; desarrolla medidas más estrictas que las empresas tienen que obedecer para continuar operando; y trabaja de la mano con industrias automotrices para el desarrollo de automóviles con baja emisión de partículas.

"Tenemos una gran responsabilidad pero con conferencias como ésta y con la cooperación de las autoridades reduciremos la contaminación ambiental", indicó William Burke, director de AQMD.