



Valley Air News

A publication of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

February 2001



When Air Pollution Worsens, School Absenteeism Rises

More children stay home sick from school due to respiratory illnesses when air pollution worsens, according to a recent scientific study published in the January issue of *Epidemiology*. Researchers at the University of Southern California (USC) found that school absences due to sore throats, coughs, asthma attacks, and similar problems increased just a few days after a significant rise in ozone, a common air pollutant.

“Increased school absenteeism from ozone exposure in children is an important adverse effect of ambient air pollution worthy of public policy consideration,” explained Frank D. Gilliland, M.D., Ph.D., a USC associate professor of preventive medicine and the study’s lead author.

Ozone increases in the air were found to be associated with a 63 percent increase in illness-related absence rates and an 83 percent increase in respiratory illnesses. Increases in ozone were also found to be associated with a 45 percent increase in respiratory illnesses and a 173 percent increase in lower respiratory illnesses with wet cough.

The study tracked school absences among 2,081 students in the fourth grade at 12 California communities during the first six months of 1996. Researchers called parents after the absences to determine the reason children missed school. They also tracked daily levels of pollutants in the air in each of the communities during the same time period.

The study was supported in part by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For the complete abstract, titled *The Effects of Ambient Air Pollution on School Absenteeism Due to Respiratory Illnesses*, and additional information on this study, visit Epidemiology Resources online @ www.epidemiology.com.



New Format for Future Issues of *Valley Air News*

This is the final monthly issue of *Valley Air News*. Beginning in May, this newsletter will be published on a quarterly basis and will be automatically distributed to non-permitted sources such as city, county and state government officials, as well as the media.

Additionally, a new publication, *Business Bulletin*, will be automatically distributed every other month to permitted sources.

These streamlined changes will assist the Valley Air District in fulfilling the mission of improving the health and quality of life for all San Joaquin Valley residents through effective and cooperative air quality programs.

To ensure receiving either *Valley Air News* or the *Business Bulletin*, please send a request via e-mail to daphne.garcia@valleyair.org or call (559) 230-5800.

GOVERNING BOARD REVIEW

The Governing Board took the following action during the January 18th Governing Board Meeting:

- Governing Board Chair Jerry O'Banion, introduced the following new Governing Board Members: Supervisor Ronn Dominici, Madera County; Councilmember Mike Maggard, City of Bakersfield; and Mayor Sam Armentrout, City of Madera.
- Supervisor Judith G. Case, Fresno County, was elected to serve as the 2001 Governing Board Chair, Mayor Sam Armentrout, City of Madera was elected to serve as the 2001 Governing Board Vice Chair.
- Approved and authorized application in the amount of \$900,000 for California Air Resources Board lower-emission School Bus Retrofit Program.
- Received a verbal report from the California Air Resources Board (ARB) on their recently adopted Risk Reduction Plan for Diesel Fueled Engines and Vehicles.
- Approved the District's 2001-2002 Legislative Platform.
- Received and filed General Purpose Financial Statements and Single Audit Reports for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2000.

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The next Governing Board meeting will be held on Thursday, February 15, at 9:00 AM in the District's Central office in Fresno, and via video-teleconference in the Modesto and Bakersfield offices.

Upcoming NTC Forum



Stakeholders are invited to participate in a forum to discuss District Rule 1180, Notices to Comply (NTC) and the District NTC policy.

The forum will be held in-person at the Central Regional Office and via video teleconferencing at the North and South Regional offices at 1:30 PM on Wednesday, February 21, 2001.

Related documents may be downloaded from http://www.valleyair.org/meetings/public_workshops_idx.htm. For additional information, please call Wayne Clarke, compliance manager at (559) 230-5968.

Power Energy Crisis



As we continue to compile a record number of Stage 3 power emergency days, the California energy crisis poses a great threat to the state and national economies. The Governor, Legislature, federal government and stakeholders are working earnestly to find short and long-term solutions to the problem. In a widespread search for the cause and a cure, a number of questions are being asked: Is the problem simply the result of an ill-designed deregulation scheme enacted by the Legislature in 1996? Are the power generators and the utilities manipulating the system? During the recent power shortages why did a number of power plants capable of supplying 15 percent of the state's electricity demand remain dormant? Did environmental regulations block construction of necessary power plants?

While the complexity and the enormity of the problem do not lend themselves to simple answers, any objective analysis would indicate that the air regulations did not pose a major impediment to siting new power plants. Seyed Sadredin, the District's permit services director, explained that the Valley Air District permitted several new merchant power plants with total capacity of 2,500 MW in the last 12 to 18 months. "This is enough power to serve 2.5 million households," he said. Sadredin also reports that in the preceding 15 years, the District permitted nearly 85 power generating facilities with nearly 3,000 MW of capacity, enough for 3 million households. "Air regulations are not the reason for more power plants not being built in California. Investors did not propose additional power plants due to economic reasons," Sadredin said.

During the recent episodes of this crisis, the District has worked with businesses in the San Joaquin Valley by exercising flexibility within the existing regulations to allow for alternative or additional sources of electricity and fuel. The District has devoted additional resources and can now process permits for new power generating facilities within 30 days. While the severity of the air quality and meteorological conditions in the Valley call for an active and effective air regulatory program, there is room for addressing the supply side of the power shortage problem in an environmentally friendly and cost effective fashion.



Consumer Assistance Program

This is an update on information that first appeared in the November 2000 issue of Valley Air News.

California has launched a Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) which pays \$1,000 to consumers who voluntarily retire their vehicles. Consumers who receive a DMV renewal notice and fail their biennial Smog Check may be eligible.

The CAP also offers consumer-friendly repairs. Consumers with vehicles that are directed to a "Test-Only" station can contribute just \$100 for any needed repairs, while the CAP will pay the remaining costs, up to \$500. Income-eligible consumers need only contribute \$20 for the needed repairs.

The CAP seeks to repair or retire 50,000 major polluters throughout the next three years. Additional details are available from the Department of Consumer Affairs' CAP Hotline at (800) 952-5210 or online @ www.dca.ca.gov.



CAPP Training Sessions

Training sessions for Certified Air Permitting Professional (CAPP) program candidates have been tentatively scheduled for April 24th and 25th at the Valley Air District's central regional office in Fresno.

Program candidates must submit a completed CAPP application form to the District by March 28, 2001. A CAPP application form may be obtained by calling (559) 230-6000 or online @ www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/ptoforms/CAPP_Application_2000.pdf.

For further information, please contact George Heinen, CAPP coordinator at (559) 230-5909.



Need Information on How to Obtain a Variance?

A variance is an administrative order granting temporary relief from provisions of a Valley Air District rule, regulation or permit condition. If granted, a variance allows the petitioner to operate temporarily while taking the necessary steps to attain compliance as soon as possible.

Petitions for variances are heard by one of the three District Hearing Boards, which usually meet monthly by region. *California Health & Safety Code Sections 42350 - 42364* set forth the California State laws dealing with variances. Each Hearing Board consists of five members: an attorney, a professional engineer, a medical professional, and two members of the public.

For assistance with the technical aspects of the rules or regulations, or for questions regarding the variance application or process, please call the Compliance Division toll-free at (800) 281-7003.

Variance applications are also available online @ www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/ptoforms/1ptoformidx.htm.