

# VALLEY AIR NEWS

A monthly publication of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District - Nov. 2013



## Valley achieves historic clean-air mark for smog

### Air District to formally ask EPA to lift the \$29 million annual penalty

For the first time in recorded history, the San Joaquin Valley has completed an ozone season with zero violations of the hourly standard, established under the federal Clean Air Act.

The official ozone season runs from March through October. The District is now in the process of submitting a formal request to the federal Environmental Protection Agency to declare the Valley in attainment of the 1-hour ozone standard and lift the \$29 million penalty mandate which Valley residents have been paying since late 2010.

Reaching this milestone has been the key focus of the Valley's air quality-management strategies for more than two decades. In 2004, the EPA classified the Valley as "Extreme" non-attainment for this standard, meaning that reaching the standard, at that time, was deemed impossible.

"Becoming the first and only region in the nation with 'Extreme' classification to meet the standard is an achievement the entire Valley should be very proud of," said Skip Barwick, chair of the Valley Air District's Governing Board.



Board Chair  
Skip Barwick

In 1996, the Valley experienced 281 violations of this hourly standard

throughout the eight-county region. The number of violations dropped to only seven in 2012 and zero in 2013.

Despite significant progress, Valley leaders were frustrated in 2010 when, under federal law, Valley residents and businesses became subject to an annual \$29 million penalty.

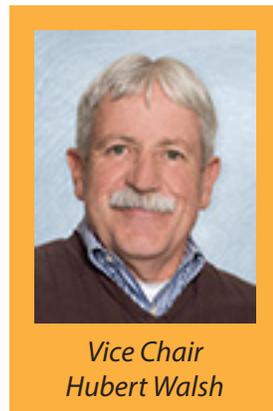
In response, the Air District crafted an alternative approach that kept penalty revenue from going to the federal government. With EPA approval, the Valley Air District was able to retain those dollars, fund clean air projects in the eight-county region and help the local economy.

This alternative approach, however, is the subject of a lawsuit filed by a Bay Area environmental law firm seeking to impose additional penalties on Valley businesses. "This historic achievement will moot frivolous lawsuits, and returns full local control to the Valley over the need and the manner of expenditure of public funds for air pollution control," Barwick said.

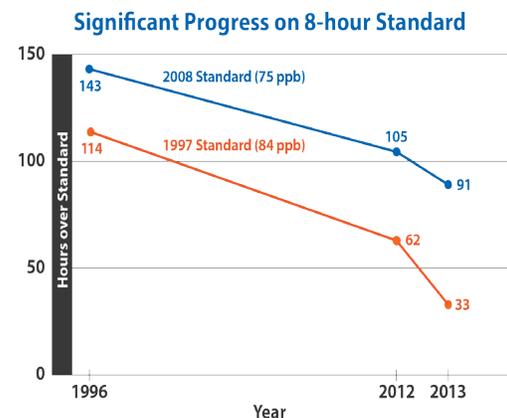
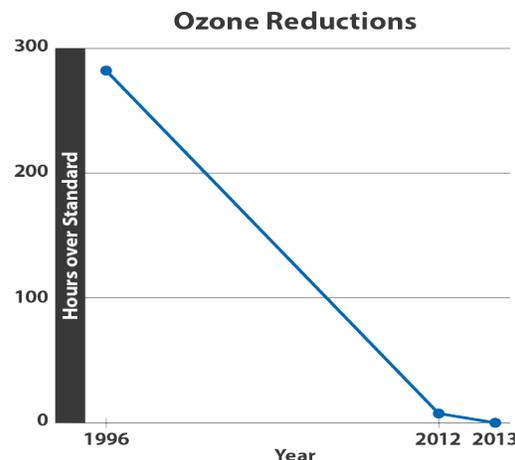
The members of the Air District's Governing Board are unanimous in their appreciation of the enormity of this achievement, and in expressing their gratitude to Valley businesses and residents for their investments and sacrifice.

"Achieving this historic milestone provides a measurable return on the great investment and sacrifice that Valley businesses and residents have made. The return comes in the

form of improved public health and quality of life for all Valley residents," said Hubert Walsh, Vice Chair of the District board and Merced County supervisor.



Vice Chair  
Hubert Walsh



  
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