

## 'Police charges' get whole new meaning

### Electric-powered two-seater tested for special events, parking patrol

By Eric Louie

Record Staff Writer

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Stockton police are plugging into the future. Since the beginning of the year, police have been testing an electric-powered, two-seat car for possible use in parking enforcement and to patrol festivals and other special events. It is made by Global Electric Motorcars, a unit of DaimlerChrysler.

Community Service Officer Maria Verbeck, the department's liaison to special events who has been testing the snub-nosed, zero-emission vehicle by driving it to and from downtown offices, said it turns heads wherever she goes.

"The biggest question is how fast it goes and is it electric," Verbeck said.

The car has its advantages and disadvantages, police say. It needs no gasoline and thus is less harmful to the environment.

"Can you imagine the smog here (during an event)?" police spokesman Doug Anderson said as he whizzed around the Weber Points Events Center in the two-seater on a sunny Friday afternoon.

But the vehicle's top speed is only about 25 mph, Anderson said.

It also cannot hold a charge for a full parking-violation-deputy's eight-hour shift.

Verbeck said one charge to its battery lasts four to five hours but can be shorter in stop-and-go traffic.

Anderson added that all of those aspects are being taken into consideration and that it's too early to say if the Police Department will buy more.

The city paid \$4,000 for the vehicle through the state, according to city officials.

Cities regularly buy through the state to take advantage of lower purchase prices that the state enjoys by buying in bulk.

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## New ag pollution rule confuses

By Audrey Cooper

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Farmers and agricultural organizations in the San Joaquin Valley say confusion is abundant when it comes to a new program to regulate major sources of air pollution on farms.

Starting May 14, farms that have heavily polluting diesel pumps, like those used for irrigation, will have to seek permits to keep those pumps running in the coming summer months. It's the first time farms have ever been regulated under the rules that govern those so-called major sources of pollution.

The difficulty for farmers is figuring out what counts as a "major" pollution source.

Despite federal efforts to make the program easy to understand, the tables and algebraic formulas to determine emission totals can inspire some major head spinning, farmers say.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has scheduled workshops around the Valley to help farmers decide whether they will need to get permits for their stationary diesel pumps.

The closest meeting to San Joaquin County will be in Modesto on April 14. Local Farm Bureau officials say they are trying to work out a way to host a workshop in this county.

Officially, groupings of diesel pumps are considered "major" pollution sources if together all the pumps on a farm produce more than 25 tons of emissions a year. Newer pumps put out fewer emissions, as do less-powerful pumps. That makes it difficult for officials to easily figure out what farms may need permits.

It gets more complicated.

Later this year, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is expected to ask for a designation as an "extreme" zone for smog pollution to avoid certain sanctions. That designation will lower the threshold for major pollution sources from 25 tons of emissions a year to just 10 tons a year.

While only a few hundred farms in the Valley might need permits now, thousands may be affected if the air basin is designated extreme, air officials speculate.

"I've seen growers worked into a frenzy, because they read in the paper that they're going to have to get a permit. And it's difficult to help them, because there aren't any really good rules of thumbs with this," said Russ Matthews, executive director of the San Joaquin Farm Bureau.

A 15-page worksheet offered online by the EPA provides tables and equations for farmers to use to figure out how much pollution their stationary diesel engines produce. Generally, a farmer who uses six small pumps might qualify as a major polluter.

This new program is being run temporarily by the EPA, which was forced to take over the program because of a lawsuit filed by environmental groups. The groups claimed the EPA acted illegally when it approved a state regulatory program that exempted farms.

In a lawsuit settlement agreement, the EPA decided to take over the California program and give the Legislature a short amount of time to remove the farm exemption.

If the exemption isn't changed by November, some California businesses could be forced to pay more for their pollution permits. If the Legislature doesn't act by May 2004, the state could lose more than \$2.3 billion in federal road-building dollars, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Legislation to remove the exemption has been written by Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter.

Once the state removes the farm exemption, local air districts would take over the farm-permitting program.

And farmers are worried that although they don't have to pay for the program now, they might be stuck with extra fees once the program is handed back to cash-strapped air regulators in California.

Environmentalists say the program will make air regulations more fair. Businesses with diesel pumps already have to get permits, for example.

Also, clean-air advocates say the Valley needs to cut pollution everywhere. The region is among the most polluted air basins in the country and has never met federal air standards.

"It's unfortunate it took a lawsuit for the EPA to pay attention to the terrible air problem in the Valley," said Susan Britton, an attorney for Earthjustice.

Earthjustice and the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment handled the lawsuit on behalf of the Sierra Club, Kern County-based Association of Irrigated Residents, Merced-based Communities for Land, Air & Water, Fresno-based Medical Alliance for Healthy Air, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Our Children's Earth Foundation.

Britton said that while only a few hundred farmers might have to get air permits, that could significantly reduce the Valley's pollution.

"Literally, these major sources of pollution are major sources of pollution," she said.

EPA spokeswoman Lisa Fasano said the agency is now targeting only diesel pumps, among the most simple sources of pollution to calculate. Large dairies, animal feedlots and farms with natural-gas pumps may have to get permits by August.

*For more information on the program, go to [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org), where there is a link to the EPA program, also called the Title V program for the specific section of the Clean Air Act.*

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### **Workshop set**

The EPA will host a workshop on the program to regulate air pollution from farms. The meeting is scheduled for April 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 4230 Kiernan Ave., Suite 130, Modesto. Another meeting is scheduled on May 8 in Bakersfield.

## Lemoore's new all-electric GEMs

Lemoore Advance, March 31, 2003

LEMOORE--There wasn't much of a break-in period for Lemoore's mini-fleet of electric cars -- actually, the three might be better classified as tiny pickups -- but call 'em what you wish -- a rose is a rose is a rose -- the GEMs are the city's first sweet-smelling venture in non-polluting, lower cost all-electric vehicles.

The three won't get to huddle together as they learn to face city duties as each has already been assigned to a different department, or at least to a different area. They cost about \$4,000 each equipped with windshield wipers, horn, turn signals, seat belts and batteries strong enough to push them along at a top speed of 25 mph. The manufacturer says they will offer a 35 mile range before each is tethered to a 110 volt extension cord for an overnight charge, but will all the extras drawing power, the driver might want to be in walking shape after 25 miles or so.

The city ordered the three little trucks from the GEM (Global Electric Motorcars, LLC), a Daimler Chrysler Company, that makes the vehicles in North Dakota -- so, with doors and an optional heater, operators could live through the winter.

But even with Lemoore's almost tropic (compared to North Dakota) winter, David Wlaschin, director of public works, the guy who decided where the commercial vehicles go, ordered doors so city employees will handle the seasons with ease.

Wlaschin ordered one with a 34x48 inch utility bed and the other two with the longer 73x48 inch bed for bigger loads.

Head on, the GEMs beauty might be apparent only to their mothers, but not stopping by the service station to spend \$25 will make them handsome to all viewers, including those who thought early VWs were ugly.

One of the long wheel based vehicles went to the city's settling ponds south of town, the smaller of the three will be used by a meter reader and the third will have duties around the corporation yard.

The light-weight vehicles, with rubber tires and disc brakes, can easily drive on the city's parks without cutting ruts -- a quality which will be the envy of outdoor workers who park their pickups away from the work.

As Valley air pollution increases and additional clean air standards are set, Lemoore may be the testing ground for other cities thinking about savings in air and costs.

And when rules and roads are designed for the GEMs -- or streets and roads are designed to share -- Lemoore may be the home to many of the little vehicles that can go from home to store to golf course and back home for a little under 25 cents for the household electric current used.

## Electric car ruling delayed by air board

By Mike Jensen - Merced Sun-Star, Saturday, March 29, 2003

An expected controversial decision on electric cars and how they will or won't be used to clean up air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley was put on hold Friday.

In the face of strong opposition from interest groups and the public - including some Merced County officials - the California Air Resources Board opted not to make a decision on how many alternative-fuel vehicles it will require automakers to produce to replace the strict quota it set for clean cars 13 years ago.

The board's staff had proposed rewriting its first-in-the-nation regulation that called for cleaner technology, such as hybrid gas-electric vehicles and cleaner gas-burning cars. The proposal also would require automakers to put 250 nonpolluting fuel cell vehicles on the road in the next five years.

But the board members opted to put off a decision until April 24 so they could learn more about some specific issues involved, said spokesman Richard Varenchik.

"They were wrangling over a lot of issues," he said.

As proposed, the rule would almost surely guarantee the death of the electric vehicle, the quiet, clean car that led the state to pass its revolutionary zero-emission vehicle rule in 1990, which would have required 10 percent of cars sold in the state this year to be pollution-free.

And that's got some San Joaquin Valley officials concerned.

Among those supporting the state's zero-emission vehicle proposal are Merced County Health Officer Dr. Timothy Livermore and Public Health Director Michael Ford.

The two county health officials sent a two-page letter to the air board urging members not to scrap the electric vehicle program.

"As fellow advocates for the public's health, we urge you to uphold the current regulations, enabling the introduction of fewer polluting vehicles into California," they said.

All five Merced County supervisors and Atwater City Councilman Andy Krotik, along with several other elected Valley officials, signed a letter encouraging the board not to make changes to the zero-emission vehicles program.

Merced County's state assemblywoman, Barbara Matthews, D-Tracy, and congressman, Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, also signed the letter.

Despite scores of enthusiastic drivers who bought or leased the electric cars, the auto industry has fought the standard and declared the battery-powered vehicle a commercial flop because it was expensive and didn't go far between lengthy charges. Drivers of the vehicles, however, suggested automakers never made an earnest effort to improve or market the cars.

"Everyone loves them," said one driver, Doug Korthof. "When I drive in the city of Los Angeles, the gang members came over to me. Were they going to shoot me? No. They said, 'Where can I get that?'"

The short answer is they can't. The vehicles are no longer sold and some companies are refusing to extend leases, leading some critics of the proposal to suggest a similar scenario if the fuel cell fails to meet its promise.

Automakers want technological changes to be driven by market demand and competition.

Most speakers at the two-day hearing, however, opposed the revision written by the staff. For more than six hours over two days, impassioned speakers reminded the board of its larger goal in cleaning up the worst smog in the state, which has led to the nation's strictest air pollution laws.

"You're part of the (state) Environmental Protection Agency, not the corporate profit protection agency," said Jerry Pohorsky, a supporter of electric vehicles.

The board has consistently eroded the zero emission rule. The board was prompted to rewrite the rule after a federal judge in Fresno sided with Detroit car makers and put the quota on hold.

"It's a complex regulation. It has not aged gracefully over the years," said Sandra Spelliscy of the Planning and Conservation League. "The only thing certain about this program is the certainty it would change."

Just how much it will change will depend on the board's action next month. Among the chief concerns is the fact the proposal would not force automakers to build fuel cell vehicles or any zero emission cars after 2009.

"We just have to have commitments for zero after 2008," said V. John White, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club. "Be sure there are numbers there or this mandate dies today."

The board was undecided on what those numbers should be and whether they could have automakers substitute other low-polluting vehicles in their place.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has officially said it's not concerned about the zero-emission vehicles and is instead hopeful that electric-gasoline hybrids will prove valuable in cleaning the air locally.

"We feel that it's going to be more attractive for Valley drivers," said spokeswoman Josette Merced Bello, speaking of hybrid vehicles.

The Valley's air is currently classified as being in "severe" noncompliance with health standards set by the federal Clean Air Act.

The Valley air district is charged with clearing the air from Bakersfield to Stockton. District officials routinely complain that nearly 60 percent of the Valley's smog comes from "mobile sources," including trucks and passenger vehicles which fall outside their regulatory jurisdiction.

Still, Merced County Supervisor Jerry O'Banion - who recently stepped down from his position as a board director for the Valley air district after seven years - said the zero-emission vehicles mandate is needed and the air board should take a tough stance in favor of it.

"We all need to do what we can," he said.

## Air plan ready for big review

By MICHAEL G. MOONEY, Modesto Bee Staff Writer  
Published: March 30, 2003, 05:15:37 AM PST

The San Joaquin Valley can breathe a sigh of relief -- well, almost. That is because the latest version of the Air Pollution Control District's draft PM-10 attainment plan is ready for public scrutiny and, soon, it is hoped, the blessing of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

While public reaction to the plan is important, what the EPA thinks ultimately will prove key.

Should the federal agency reject the plan, residents and businesses throughout the air district -- which stretches from Lodi to Bakersfield -- would face onerous sanctions. Penalties could include mandatory no-driving days and cutting off federal highway money.

"We want to try and avoid that," said Dave Jones, air district planning manager. "We'll work closely with the EPA to make sure we satisfy their concerns."

In order to avoid those sanctions, the EPA must approve the air district's PM-10 plan no later than Aug. 28.

The 25,000-square-mile district has been in violation of standards set by the federal Clean Air Act since the mid-1990s. The EPA rejected a similar plan to clean up the valley's air in the late 1990s.

PM stands for particulate matter -- potentially harmful particles found in the air we breathe.

The particles vary in size and include everything from microscopic residue caused by chemical reactions in the air to soot, smoke or wind-blown dust.

Air quality standards are based on the fraction of particulate matter that measures 10 or less microns in aerodynamic diameter -- about one-seventh the diameter of a human hair.

The smaller the particle, the deeper it is absorbed into the body and the more damage it can cause. Particles larger than PM-10 are almost exclusively deposited in the nose and throat.

Various scientific studies have shown that exposure to PM-10 can harm lung tissue, exacerbate existing problems such as asthma and heart disease, cause cancer and lead to premature death.

Air district officials say the elderly, children, and people with chronic lung disease, influenza or asthma tend to be especially sensitive to the effects of particulate matter.

EPA officials have identified the San Joaquin Valley as one of the five dirtiest air basins in the nation.

But Jones and Dave Mitchell, who served as project director for the latest PM-10 plan, believe that this version will pass muster with the EPA, even though one of the components -- regulation of fireplaces and other wood burning devices -- still has not been completed.

"Most of the regulations we need already are in place," Mitchell said. "When we submitted our plans before (the late 1990s), we did not include enough backup documentation and data."

Plan leaves no stone unturned

The new plan provides for the entire air district to be in EPA compliance for the PM-10 standard by 2010 and addresses a number of key issues, including:

Stationary sources of air pollution, such as industrial smoke stacks, diesel engines used to power various farming operations and the like.

Contingency measures -- a system of operating permits and fines -- to ensure emission reductions are in place and cannot be circumvented.

Guarantees of annual reductions of at least 5 percent of PM-10 or precursor PM-10 emissions until attainment is achieved districtwide by 2010.

Use of the best available control measures and/or technology for all significant sources of PM-10 or PM-10 precursor emissions.

Good progress also has been made, Mitchell said, on controlling dust associated with farming operations. Conservation practices, including leaving organic materials in the till and rotating crops, leave fewer dust clouds.

Adequate moisture in recent years, he said, also has helped keep dust under control.

One significant component of the PM-10 plan, however, has not been completed -- the so-called fireplace rule.

The EPA has been pressuring the district to get the new rule in place by May. But Jones said adoption probably will not happen until July.

While the delay means the EPA technically could order sanctions, Jones insisted, even with the delay, the fireplace rule should be in place before any sanctions would be imposed.

"The EPA wanted it in May," he said, "but they will work with us on this."

While wood-burning fireplaces and stoves are only part of the valley's particulate matter problems, air district officials say, they play a significant role.

District data show that fireplaces, along with pellet stoves and fireplace inserts not certified by the EPA, account for up to 30 percent of the region's particulate matter pollution during winter months.

The district is making changes to the rule based upon a series of public workshops held last year.

"We hope to have the (revised fireplace) rule ready in a couple of weeks," Jones said. "We will try to give at least three weeks' notice on the public workshops."

Mitchell said those workshops probably will be scheduled for late April or early May.

Jones said air district staff was stretched too thin to get the fireplace rule completed by the May deadline. He said finishing the overall PM plan was a higher priority.

Holiday focus for fireplace ban

Under the proposed fireplace rule, it is possible that fireplace use could be banned for one or more days during the Christmas holidays, district officials say, because that's when particulate matter pollution often is at its worst.

The fireplace ban would be mandatory and those who ignore it could be fined.

"We are making adjustments to the rule," Jones said. "But I'm not sure those adjustments will make everybody happy."

Another unresolved issue is ammonia released into the valley's air from fertilizers, manure and urine. The problem is specifically associated with large-scale dairy operations.

Mitchell said ammonia gasses released into the atmosphere can combine with other pollutants, such as vehicle exhaust, to form ammonium nitrate -- another type of particulate pollution.

Some scientists believe the tiny particles can hasten the deaths of heart patients and others suffering from serious respiratory diseases.

"More research is needed," Mitchell said, "before we can start crafting rules."

## Solvent to help clear valley's air

By MATT WEISER, Californian staff writer  
The Bakersfield Californian  
March 30, 2003

The next time you get your dry cleaning done in Bakersfield, you might be helping clean up the valley's toxic air pollution.

A new dry-cleaning solvent is about to make a big splash on the market, replacing the polluting and hazardous perchloroethylene. Also known simply as "perc," the fumes from this industry standard-bearer are one of the top 10 health threats in California's air, blamed each year for an estimated 128 cancer cases statewide and three in Kern County.

The new solvent is a silicone-based compound that doesn't pollute the air or water. Today Cleaners, Kern County's biggest retail dry-cleaning business, has switched three of its 10 Bakersfield stores to the new compound and plans to convert the rest by the end of the year. Another store set to open today will have the new solvent.

President Jeff Newman Jr., a lifelong Bakersfield resident, said he felt compelled to convert the 52-year-old family business after watching the valley's smog worsen.

"You can't go out of your house and see this black crud laying in the air and not try to do something to clean it up," said Newman, 35. "I just want to set an example for other businesses, even though I'm a small player. If everyone did a little bit, it might get better."

About 500 tons of perc gases are released into the valley's air annually, mostly by dry cleaners. The chemical is also blamed for polluting one out of every 10 groundwater wells in the state.

The new solvent, sold by GreenEarth Cleaning of Kansas City, Mo., is not a volatile organic chemical and, therefore, does not require a permit from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

And unlike perc, the GreenEarth silicone compound doesn't have a noxious odor, and it doesn't cause skin irritation, nausea or breathing difficulties.

"Some days, it was real overwhelming with the smell," Vicki Hernandez, manager of the Today Cleaners at Stockdale Highway and Gosford Road, said of working with perc. The store recently switched to the GreenEarth process.

The silicone also leaves clothes feeling softer, eliminating damage of buttons or fancy trim, and doesn't fade or wrinkle clothes. All this cuts labor costs after washing.

"It cleans better, it has no odor to it and it extends the garment's life," said Prashant Patel, owner of Green Cleaner on Olive Drive in Oildale, who switched to the new solvent two years ago. "We can get almost 20 to 30 percent more productivity out of the people working here because it does not wrinkle the garment in the cleaning process. It just eliminates all the problems we had in the other process."

The new process requires a substantial investment, Newman said. New dry-cleaning machines are required, and they cost more than perc-based machines. Their cycle times are longer, which increases energy costs. The silicone-based solvent also costs more than perc. Newman said converting each store costs about \$75,000.

However, the good news for customers is that no cost increase is expected as a result of the new process, Newman added.

Today Cleaners converted its first store, at Ming Avenue and New Stine Road, two years ago as a pilot project, then followed with the downtown store at 21st and H streets. The store at Stockdale and Gosford was next, and a new store at Coffee Road and Olive Drive is scheduled to open with the new process today. Newman said the remaining seven stores will get switched over before the year is out.

GreenEarth Cleaning is a partnership that includes General Electric and Procter & Gamble. The silicone solvent, developed by Dow Corning, is similar to silicones used in many consumer products, including deodorants and cosmetics. It is also similar to the compound once used in silicone breast implants, which some researchers linked to health problems after implants leaked.

Just like perc, the silicone solvent also may pose an inhalation hazard, although testing so far indicates this threat is minor in comparison. Dow Corning is now engaged in a laboratory study, supervised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to determine whether the silicone compound is hazardous when inhaled. Early results indicate a potential for health problems, but only at exposures greater than what a dry-cleaning consumer would experience.

In a 2002 study of the dry-cleaning industry, the nonprofit Coalition for Clean Air, based in Los Angeles, called GreenEarth a "promising" alternative to perc that should be studied further.

"We believe perc is really nasty, and there's plenty of evidence about how harmful perc is," said Tim Carmichael, the group's executive director. "GreenEarth is probably less toxic than perc. Because we know testing was being done and the results were not back, we did not feel comfortable advocating for this perc alternative."

Only about 300 dry cleaners nationwide have switched to the GreenEarth solvent so far, so it remains to be seen whether the industry will embrace it. More than 85 percent of the nation's dry cleaners still use perc, despite the associated risks and regulations, but Newman is convinced it was time to try something better.

"It's a real gamble for me to change 50 years of technology to something new," Newman said. "But it makes me happy to be able to do this. It's the most environmentally safe solvent that you could possibly use. Obviously we're a small air polluter, but if everyone thought that they couldn't make a difference, it's never going to get better."

**Viewpoint / Loron Hodge: Agriculture is not the 'bad guy' in air pollution problem**  
The Bakersfield Californian  
March 29, 2003

News reports have pointed a collective finger at agriculture as the culprit for air quality problems in the valley. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Agriculture was a key supporter of Project Clean Air for many years, supporting a program to use almond prunings to produce biomass energy. More than 150 growers, representing 850,000 acres, pledged to curtail burning, using biomass instead. The program only lasted as long as the biomass facilities were able to sell electricity to the grid. Although the contracts were not renewed, it remains a viable alternative.

To help control ozone, older farm pumps and engines have been replaced by many with efficient, cleaner-burning engines through the Carl Moyer Program offered by the California Air Resources Board and the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District.

The Title V Act of the federal Clean Air Act is a lengthy permitting procedure for emissions from stationary sources only, doing nothing to actually clean the air, creating only a paper stream for which the government can charge fees. Ag has opposed Title V because of this, but due to a recent lawsuit settlement, permits will now be required for all owners of stationary engines, and those who do not comply will face heavy fines and possible legal action.

Agriculture voluntarily works to help reduce particulate matter (PM10) by urging growers to water dirt roads, and use oil or soil suppressants. Controlling dust is necessary to help clean the air and is also necessary to cut yield losses. Dust can breed mites and fungus that severely damage trees, vines and field crops.

We worked with the local Air district to create a PM10 plan that was adopted in November 2001 by the district. As a result, there now exists for distribution a brochure for producers urging compliance with the best available control measures.

Critics have said that agriculture was given preferential treatment to get approval of the plan, which is not true. The importance of this issue is why we met with our representatives to the air district, Kern County Supervisor Barbara Patrick and Bakersfield City Councilman Mike Maggard. Our concerns were outlined and left up to them to decide the best course of action. After its approval, the plan was supposed to be submitted to the EPA. For some reason, it never was. A new plan will be adopted later this year.

A recent study shows that the huge number of trees, vines and alfalfa fields throughout the Central Valley can remove 1,190 tons of ozone from the air each day. CARB and the air district are reluctant to verify this finding. They are bent on passing regulations to control agriculture operations, which are based on inadequate, faulty science. Filtration contributed from ag crops should not be ignored.

We care about clean air. Farmers' families have children who breathe the same air as everyone else. We oppose passing a law just for the sake of passing a law. If it doesn't work to improve the air what good is it?

We will continue our work with the air district and others including our elected representatives to improve our valley's air. We know we have to do our part and we will.  
*Loron J. Hodge is the executive director of the Kern County Farm Bureau.*

## Viewpoint / Dean Florez: Pollution controls on agriculture needed, but controversial

The Bakersfield Californian  
March 29, 2003

Today, most politicians believe to succeed they must follow the prevailing winds of public opinion. I believe the opposite.

The best public servants are those who create or change public perception. Today, we need politicians, who like kites, rise against, not with the wind.

For too long the prevailing wind has been that we can pollute our way to prosperity in the valley. A storm is now raging over a legislative package I have introduced to take an aggressive stance against the air pollution crisis that is choking the Central Valley.

As a whole, the measures takes a broad, wide-reaching approach to eliminate or restrict many controllable sources of air pollution that has given the valley the distinction of having the second dirtiest air in the nation.

The health statistics alone, not to mention the economic damage and the eminent threat of losing important federal funding were the catalyst for my involvement in this issue. There is no doubt that something has to be done to address this pressing problem. Quite frankly, I understand this is a politically unpopular issue given it is going to require us to change our lifestyle and the way we conduct our business.

But I think cleaner air can be achieved in a way that ensures that we maintain a healthy agriculture economy and clean air for our asthmatic children to breathe. It is going to require all stakeholders to come to the table to help create a workable solution to our local problem.

In approaching this issue I've set one important ground rule: We need to conduct our business in public. No backroom deals, special compacts or watered-down solutions that do not really clean our air. That's why I'm committed to conducting over 13 hearings throughout the Central Valley to hear from as many people as possible on this issue.

I am very pleased with the many folks in the agriculture community who have come to the table to work with me thus far to help make clean air legislation a viable weapon against the haze that is hanging over our heads.

Valley agriculture is at an important crossroad in the pollution equation. The consequences of doing nothing are too great. Pollutants are up 17 percent in the last three years alone. Childhood asthma rates in the valley are now twice those of Los Angeles.

Billions of dollars for valley roads will soon be pulled back by the federal government for non-attainment of air quality standards. Smog is now even blamed for a 20 percent to 30 percent drop in crop production.

But more importantly, if valley farmers are perceived as sitting on their hands on this issue, they run the real risk of damaging their support within the greater valley community.

Who knows how far local residents will go to protect their children from damaging pollutants. Industry leaders should seek to solve this issue now, in the public forum, rather than face it in the future at the ballot box.

Now is the time to strike a balance and begin the long road to cleaning our air. Throughout this debate, however, let us continue to remember one important fact: A human can live for about six weeks without food, and about six days without water, but only six minutes without air.

*State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, represents the 16th District, which includes Kern County.*

## City, county to hash out issues in Monday session

The Bakersfield Californian  
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City and county leaders will hold a joint session Monday to discuss everything from air quality to the new airport terminal to bulky waste pickups.

The meeting is one of two scheduled this year between the two governments.

Neither board is expected to make any formal decisions at the joint meeting, which will be held at 5:30 p.m. in the city council chambers, 1501 Truxtun Ave.

County officials are expected to debut their plans to institute a monthly service that would allow residents to have large trash picked up, including appliances or furniture.

The new service would almost certainly cost more than the current \$11.80-per-month rate.

County officials said they decided to explore the new pickup program after seeing continued problems with illegal dumping, despite requiring trash collection. Supervisors imposed mandatory trash collection in unincorporated Bakersfield and Oildale in 2001.

"Mandatory collection fixed part of the illegal dumping problem, but not all of it," said Daphne Washington, head of the county waste management department.

Washington said she expects the bulky waste pickup program to go before the county board by June, if they embrace the idea Monday.

In addition to trash, the joint boards will also hear presentations on the city's efforts to clean up the air, which include buying natural gas-powered fleet vehicles, installing bike racks at city facilities and even promoting residential development close to places of employment.

City officials will also update both boards on the progress of the Westside Parkway and county officials will update on the new \$22 million air terminal at Meadows Field.

## Asthma poses major problem

By Dr. Joseph Bakhoum, M.D.  
Visalia Times-Delta  
March 31, 2003

Asthma in America today poses a major medical and economic challenge. It is the most common chronic illness in childhood and the most frequent admitting diagnosis in children hospitals. It is estimated that 7 percent to 10 percent of girls and 10 percent to 15 percent of boys may have asthma at sometime during their childhood.

Asthma causes about 100 million days of restricted activity and a half million hospitalizations annually nationwide.

Recent surveys show that about 5,000 people die of asthma annually.

Economically, asthma costs the U.S. close to \$14 billion annually.

Astonishingly enough, despite the great advances in our current knowledge, complications and deaths are on the rise.

Diagnosis of asthma should be made as early as possible to allow early and appropriate therapeutic intervention.

History of symptoms is of paramount importance in reaching such a diagnosis.

Allergy testing is extremely useful in identifying the various allergens, such as dust or molds, that the patient may be allergic to.

Chest X-rays may be useful initially to rule out other diagnoses that can mimic asthma.

The best results of asthma therapy are likely to be achieved only if it is comprehensive. By the latter, I mean a regimen that involves environmental-control measures through allergen avoidance, appropriate drug treatment -- including allergy shots if warranted, treatment of commonly associated conditions such as allergic rhinitis or sinusitis and, last but not least, continuous patient education.

Asthma treatment goals are clear: We aim to prevent disability, minimize physical and psychological illness, minimize acute attacks, maintain daily activity and functional ability, sustain quality of life for patients and reduce work and school absenteeism.

We have done a remarkable job of uncovering a major portion of the disease mystery and discovering new treatments.

However, we still have a lot of work ahead of us to do in terms of the proper implementation of those discoveries as well as updated patient education and public awareness.

#### **To learn more**

"Spring Into Asthma Control," an educational event focusing on asthma control and sponsored by the Tulare County Asthma Coalition, will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 12 at the Visalia Convention Center. Information: Christine Foster at 685-3494.

*Dr. Joseph Bakhoun, M.D., a specialist in asthma and allergies and recently certified as an asthma educator, practices at the Pediatric and Allergy Center.*

## **Waste not, want not; dairy powers itself**

### **Family dairy turns manure into electricity**

Visalia Times-Delta

By Amee M. Thompson



Teresa Douglass/Times-Delta

*The Koetsier family dairymen, from the left, Henry Jr., 43, John, 51, Henry, 74, Ron, 45, and Ron Jr., 24, pose for a portrait on their dairy west of Visalia. The family's method for turning animal waste into electricity is paying off -- to the tune of about \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month.*

Back in 1985, Ron Koetsier Sr. and his partners in the family dairy realized that it would work to their advantage to produce their own electricity.

So, they built a massive manure digester -- more commonly referred to as a methane digester -- which is 180 feet long by 30 feet wide and 16 feet deep in the center. Each morning the freestall barn is scraped and the manure is vacuumed into a truck, similar to a water truck, and then pumped into the digester.

The manure is kept at a constant 110 degrees, the ideal temperature for parasites to grow and feed on the manure. The parasites then release methane gas. The methane gas rises above the manure lifting a woven canvas-and-rubber cover that balloons up like a bounce house.

The gas is then pumped off to a generator which supplies 90 percent of the electricity it takes to run the dairy, four homes on the premises and a mobile home, Koetsier said. When summer hits, a second generator will be put to use to account for the increase in electricity the dairy will demand, he said.

"We're saving \$3,000 to \$4,000 a month," Koetsier said.

But the digester has not been working constantly since 1985. The Koetsiers had problems after running it for three years and it was shut down because of inefficiencies.

"We weren't using it properly," Koetsier said. "We were using manure from both the freestall barn and the corral."

A freestall barn is lined with concrete and has separate beds for the cows that are separated with pipe barriers.

A pipe hung loosely over the top of the separators makes sure that the cows must back up and deposit their manure on the concrete slab. Corrals are open pens, usually with dirt floors that turn to mud during the winter.

Manure scraped up from the corral included so much dirt that the digester would be clogged up and needed draining and cleaning.

The time and energy that had to be put into the digester was just too costly, Koetsier said.

Issues like that have played a large role in keeping methane digesters from catching on, said Mike Gamroth, extension dairy specialist at Oregon State University, who spoke at the 2003 World Ag Expo in February.

Other issues include:

- Poor design

- Dairy farmers' lack of skills and time to operate the digester

- Excessive maintenance needed to keep it running properly

- Diminishing returns over time when maintenance is not kept up

- Lack of interest

- Dairy farmers who have gone out of business.

However, back in 2001 when the state was threatening rolling blackouts because of the energy crisis, the Koetsiers did some research and started using the digester again.

"I talked to other dairymen with similar systems," Ron Koetsier said. "Every one who had a digester said they were scraping the concrete only. At the same time there was a study that showed 55 percent of manure scraped from corral was dirt. That told me what I was doing wrong."

Now the Koetsiers run their digester 24 hours a day, seven days a week with manure only scraped off of the freestall barn floor.

The manure that isn't digested -- which includes the particles that are too big for the parasites to consume -- is dried and recycled as bedding for the cows.

This takes away the need for a lagoon, although the Koetsiers still have one for the manure that is scraped out of the corrals.

Although Koetsier would like to sell excess electricity to a utility, he has yet to secure a contract with Southern California Edison Co.

He would also like to get an automated system that would delete the truck and the worker required to drive it, making the digester even more cost efficient.

But Koetsier said he doesn't see every dairy in the county switching over to the digester because of the high capital costs of building it and then the maintenance that needs to be done daily.

"Does everybody put solar units on their house?" he said.

#### Koetsier Dairy

History of the dairy: Henry Koetsier, Sr. started the dairy in 1947 in Artesia after he bought his uncle's herd, which he had worked with for three years prior after immigrating from Holland. The dairy was then moved to Chino in 1951, where over a span of 21 years it was in two locations. In September 1972, the dairy was moved to its current location in Visalia. The dairy shipped to Challenge when it was located in southern California, but when it moved to Visalia it had to change to then Dairymen's Cooperative Creamery, which is now owned by Land O'Lakes.

Family members involved: Harry Koetsier, Sr. is still a partner in the dairy at 74-years-old, although he is more of a financial partner than an active one. His sons Ron Koetsier, Sr., 45, and Henry Koetsier, Jr., 43, are active partners in the dairy, seeing to the daily business. Another son John Koetsier, 51, works on the dairy. Ron's son Ron Koetsier, Jr. 24, is also working on the dairy.

Herd size: The Koetsier's milk 1,500 head of cows twice daily.

## CART is Recipient of \$100,000 Grant from Valley Clean Air Now (CAN)

Fresno Business Council Weekly Bulletin, Monday March 31

The Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART), a joint venture high school program between Fresno Unified and Clovis Unified, has just been notified that it will receive grant funding to further its work on air quality issues. CART has been awarded a **\$100,000** grant from Valley Clean Air Now. CART will develop curriculum and classroom assignments that will result in products and activities that educate the community about the Valley's air quality. CART will use some of the money to purchase sophisticated equipment, which will provide students with the tools and resources necessary to successfully understand and evaluate the air quality, and it's effects. Nine of CART's labs will be working on air quality projects next year.