

## **The grim statistics**

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, August 5, 2002

According to the 2002 State of the Air Report from the American Lung Association, the Valley has some of the most ozone-polluted air in the country. Ozone is a major component of smog.

Merced County is the seventh most ozone-polluted county in the nation, according to the report.

Kern County, at the south end of the San Joaquin Valley air basin, is the second worst, and Fresno County is third worst.

San Bernardino County, outside the Central Valley's air basin, is the worst.

According to the American Lung Association report, there are 3,775 cases of pediatric asthma and 9,484 cases of adult asthma in Merced County. The total is 6.6 percent of county's population.

Between 14 million and 15 million people in the United States are thought to have asthma. That's between 4.9 and 5.2 percent of the total population.

Additionally there are 5,616 cases of chronic bronchitis and 1,625 cases of emphysema in Merced County.

In Kern County, ranked number two for ozone pollution, 42,849 of its 642,495 residents have asthma. That's about 6.7 percent of the population.

## **Letters to the Editor, Fresno Bee, Tuesday, August 6**

### **'Consolidate now'**

By Annie Lokrantz  
Fresno

Fresnans are waking up, saying, "not in my town." Our luck is running out for a derailment to destroy our town in a few seconds. We cannot remain lucky forever. Those who don't know about Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation (FARRC) should attend one of its public meetings or education presentations and get involved.

Fresnans are concerned about road safety and air quality. By continuing to have 90,000 cars idling an average of four minutes at rail crossings daily, we continue creating poor air quality.

Rail consolidation needs Measure C to become reality. That half-cent sales tax we already pay will be extended. I don't know about you, but I do notice the road and freeway improvements.

Rail consolidation will be a major provider of jobs. I'm shocked our local politicians haven't jumped on this opportunity for Fresno to lower its high unemployment and bring this economic bonanza to our people. It's estimated rail consolidation in Fresno could create 6,000 local jobs over the next decade. Our politicians need to be hounding our representatives in Sacramento and Washington to bring the funding to Fresno and begin rail consolidation.

It is crucial that we support Measure C and consolidate now, for air quality, for safer streets and for a better quality of life. Let's say once and for all "not in our town."

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