

## Hold firm

### **New "fireplace rule" is an essential part of cleaning up the Valley's air.**

Fresno Bee Editorial

(Published Wednesday, May 7, 2003, 4:30 AM)

The people who make artificial logs and supply real ones, and the fireplaces and stoves to burn them in, object strenuously to severe limits on residential wood burning proposed by the Valley's air district. It's easy to see why: The rule may threaten their jobs. But the pollution such devices and materials produce does more than threaten livelihoods -- it threatens lives.

That's why the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District must stand firm in defense of its proposed rule, which would ban residential wood burning altogether on the worst-polluted nights each winter.

The tiny particles of soot, ash, dust and smoke that fires produce have been linked to the asthma and bronchitis so widespread in the Valley. They are also associated with heart disease and premature deaths.

Residential wood burning throws about 25 tons a day of those particulates into the Valley's already polluted air during the winter, according to the district. On the worst nights, wood smoke accounts for as much as one-third of the particles in the air in the Valley's urban areas.

A small number of Valley residents have only wood fires to heat their homes. They would be exempt from the ban, as would those who live above the 3,000-foot elevation in local foothills and mountains.

It will be hard for some of us to give up fireplaces on a few winter evenings; there is no questioning the cozy ambience a crackling fire can cast on a chilly night. But stacked against the massive health problems our polluted air creates, it's an easy choice.

There has always been a great danger that the effort required to clean up our air would be picked apart a piece at a time by one group or another. If that happens, the wheezing and coughing -- and the dying -- will just go on and on.

We can't let that happen. The rule on residential wood burning is an essential part of the larger effort. It must stand.

## **San Joaquin Valley residents, industry clash on plan to limit wood burning**

Wednesday, May 07, 2003  
- Associated Press

FRESNO - Members of the manufactured log industry clashed with asthmatics and health advocates Monday night over a plan to clean up air by limiting home wood burning in the San Joaquin Valley.

Industry representatives object to a draft rule banning the use of any wood-burning device, even on days when particle pollution is not extremely severe. They said the rule would discourage people from using newer, cleaner wood-burning technologies.

"Encouraging Valley residents to switch to cleaner-burning solid fuel technology is the practical way to deal with reducing emissions from fireplaces," said Christopher P. Caron, vice president of marketing for Duraflame.

Industry representatives said they support an earlier version of a draft no-burn rule, which had a two-level system for limiting wood burning. On less-polluted nights, the ban would apply only to residents with wood-burning heaters not certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and to those with open fireplaces. On more polluted nights, no burning would be allowed in any wood-burning device at all.

But district staff have said that the two-level ban system would be too hard to implement.

The revised rule, which could go into effect this winter, is based on the impact on human health, said Tom Jordan, a district air quality planner.

Particle pollution - microscopic particles of ash, dust, smoke and soot - can trigger asthma and bronchial attacks. It is also linked to heart attacks and premature deaths.

Ten years ago, the district came under pressure for a no-burn proposal and settled on the current voluntary "Please don't light tonight" program.

But current EPA requirements say the district must adopt a mandatory no-burn rule to reduce particle pollution, or face federal sanctions.

The proposed prohibition would limit a burning ban to areas identified by the district based on weather and air-quality conditions. For example, residents in Fresno County could be told they could not burn on a night while those living in Merced County or Tulare County were allowed to burn wood.

The no-burn rule also would not allow wood-burning devices in new developments that have more than two houses per acre. Older, dirtier wood-

burning stoves and inserts that are not EPA-certified would have to be disabled, upgraded or removed before a homeowner sells a house.

Homes at 3,000 feet or higher in elevation, those without natural gas service, those using propane and those in which wood burning is the only source of heat would be exempt from the new regulation.

District staffers hope to submit a no-burn rule to the air district board for action in July.

California News, The Bakersfield Californian

## **Dairies are largest source of ammonia emissions**

The Associated Press

Tuesday May 06, 2003, 12:05:07 PM

CHINO, Calif. (AP) - Fumes are forcing dairies out of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, where ammonia rises from the pastures at an estimated 21 tons each day.

Environmental regulators, who usually battle traffic-polluting urban sprawl in favor of saving farmland, approve of ousting dairies because they are the largest source of ammonia emissions in Southern California.

The prevailing winds wafting over the region carry tons of nitrogen oxides produced by cars, power plants and factories. The mixing of nitrogen oxides and ammonia produce a haze of tiny particles of ammonium nitrate. Western Riverside and San Bernardino counties suffer from some of the worst particulate pollution in the nation.

With houses replacing dairies, the plume of ammonia will continue to dissipate.

"In this case, growth will take out the cows and that will have a beneficial impact on particulate matter," said Roger Atkinson, director of the Air Pollution Research Center at the University of California, Riverside.

Unlike other polluters, the dairies have escaped regulation of their emissions. But the South Coast Air Quality Management District is now preparing a control measure aimed at reducing emissions by at least half over the next decade.

The agency is considering more stringent rules on manure removal and greater use of "digesters" that derive methane fuel from manure.

District deputy executive officer Elaine Chang said it is unlikely that the Riverside area will be able to meet the federal limit for very small airborne particles by 2014 without significant reductions at the dairies.

## **Pesticides found to drift for miles**

### **State officials note concern, but call new report overblown**

By Audrey Cooper

Record Staff Writer

Published Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Pesticides sprayed on fields, parks and lawns can travel in the air for miles, and regulators have long ignored that sort of migrating poison, according to a report out today.

The report by some members of the group Californians for Pesticide Reform accuses federal and state regulators of not doing enough to phase out dangerous pesticides, especially those prone to drift.

State pesticide officials Tuesday disputed that pesticides are found in dangerous levels miles away from fields. They called the report alarmist.

The study by Pesticide Action Network North America, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation and Pesticide Education Center analyzed state air data for six pesticides. Four of those pesticides are widely used in San Joaquin County.

The air data showed two of the chemicals used in San Joaquin County -- methyl bromide and metam sodium, both fumigants -- were often found floating in the air miles from cropland, even in upwind areas. Seasonal exposure to young children living within a few miles of pesticide use can exceed safe levels by up to eight times, according to the report.

Prolonged and intense exposure to pesticides and herbicides can cause neurological damage, prompt severe asthma attacks and cause cancer, among other things.

"Pesticides in the air are often invisible and odorless, but like secondhand cigarette smoke, inhaling even small amounts over time can lead to serious health problems, especially for children," said Susan Kegley, a study author and staff scientist at the Pesticide Action Network North America.

"Although they may not be aware of it, urban residents, schoolchildren, suburban dwellers and farm workers across the state (breathe) ... unsafe levels of toxic pesticides," Kegley said.

Another study author, Anne Katten of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, pointed to the Lodi-Woodbridge Wine Grape Commission's pest-management program as an industry model. Those grape growers are encouraged to find alternatives to pesticides, such as using other insects, owls or bats to prey on problem pests.

Katten said farmers need help switching to less toxic pest-control methods.

Officials with the state Department of Pesticide Regulation agreed that airborne pesticides are a concern. The agency is working on the issue, according to a statement released Tuesday by agency spokesman Glenn Brank.

But the agency has analyzed the same air data included in the "Secondhand Pesticides" report and concluded that when scientific variables were taken into account, short-term and seasonal air quality was not toxic to residents.

Meanwhile, the state Department of pesticide Regulation is working on new restrictions for metam sodium. Methyl bromide is scheduled to be banned for nearly all uses by 2005.

That proves state and federal regulators are working to minimize public-health problems that may be associated with pesticides, said Sara Miller, a spokeswoman for the California Plant Health Association. The group represents pesticide companies.

"The products on the market now have gone through stringent requirements. They're shown to be safe, or at least more beneficial than they are harmful," Miller said.

Ray Chavira, an environmental scientist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's pesticide office, said the report was credible. Although the exact risk estimates may be up for interpretation, it is known that residents can be exposed to harmful airborne pesticides, he said.

California has unique problems regarding pesticide drift, because farming areas are often surrounded by residential developments. The EPA is working on developing new pesticide-label instructions to help deal with drift problems, Chavira said.

San Joaquin County was No. 4 on the list of California counties that used the most pesticides in 2000. In 2001, the county's rank dropped to No. 6. That year, farmers applied more than

7.5 million pounds of chemicals to fields and orchards.

\* To reach reporter Audrey Cooper, phone 546-8298 or e-mail [acooper@recordnet.com](mailto:acooper@recordnet.com)

## **Last chance to speak out on wood-burning proposal**

Modesto Bee, May 7, 2003

The last in a series of workshops looking at a proposal banning wood fires when pollution reaches unhealthy levels in the Central Valley will be in Modesto. Experts say particulate-matter pollution -- including nitrates, microscopic pieces of ash, tiny drops of liquid, dust, smoke and soot -- can impair lung function and worsen bronchitis, as well as trigger asthma and heart attacks. The session will begin at 2 p.m. at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's office, 4230 Kiernan Ave., Suite 130.

## **Growth adds to ozone levels in valley's air**

Published: May 7, Modesto Bee Opinions

The American Lung Association's "State of the Air Report 2003," released last week, gave 28 California counties failing grades for ozone air pollution. The scores are based on the number of days air quality fell below federal standards over a two-year period, weighted by the severity of pollution.

Every single county in the San Joaquin Valley earned an "F." As expected, the farther south the county, the worse the air quality.

Kern and Tulare counties lead the pack -- if that's the right way to put it -- with 219 days and 216 days below federal standards, respectively. In the Northern San Joaquin Valley and foothills:

Merced County racked up 97 days.

Tuolumne County posted 56 days.

Mariposa County logged 45 days.

Calaveras County had 38 days.

Stanislaus County accumulated 32 days.

San Joaquin County accrued 13 days.

Those numbers -- and the failing grades they bring -- aren't likely to reassure the thousands in this region who suffer from asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

Ground-level ozone is the principal ingredient of smog. It forms when exhaust from cars, trucks and other diesel- or gas-powered engines cook in sunlight. A recent study by the University of Southern California suggests ozone may not just aggravate asthma (which researchers have known for some time), but trigger

it as well. In the USC study, children living in high-ozone communities who actively participated in sports were more likely to develop asthma than similarly active children in less polluted communities.

The San Joaquin Valley, one of the smoggiest regions in the country, has the highest rates of asthma. In Stanislaus County, about 22,000 adults -- and 7,700 children ages 14 and under -- have the disease, according to the report. Pollens, dust and even fur and feathers from animals can cause asthma, but human activities that come with increasing development and commerce have had an effect as well.

In general, colder summers bring cleaner air. So year-to-year changes in air quality that organizations such as the American Lung Association measure can sometimes be attributed to weather patterns. But weather conditions aside, urban development, population growth, polluting agricultural practices and the increase in motor vehicle use in California's valley and foothill communities have taken a toll. Asthma is part of that toll. Over the long run, California's air and the health of its citizens will depend on our ability to reduce the pollution caused by our own activities.

For more on the American Lung Association State of the Air Report 2003, visit <http://lungaction.org/reports>.

Modesto Bee Letters to the Editor

## Want control? Pay for it

Since the city, state and environmentalists want to tell me when I can use my fireplace and when I can use water, how would they like to pay my house payment or my property tax? I own my home, but I have to do as they say.

And since I have to water the tree Modesto put in my front yard, will I get a deduction from my water bill, or should I let the tree die?

BARBARA CAROTENUTO

Modesto