

Smog prospects cloud regulator's good air news

The Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley's top air regulator visited *The Californian* Tuesday with good news and bad.

On the upside, the valley now meets a federal standard for fine dust and diesel fumes known as PM 2.5, said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. What aren't so good, he said, are our smog prospects. The valley must cut 60 percent of emissions and secure as much as \$1 billion to meet an ozone standard coming due in 2013.

Sadredin took a few minutes to answer five questions from reporter Sarah Ruby.

1. What kind of summer did we have in terms of air quality?

We didn't have one of our best years but it was one of the better years ... despite tremendous challenges with respect to the temperature and stagnant conditions. Our conclusion is ... the work that has been done on air pollution ... has really done the job.

2. We're heading into the fall, the season of fireplace restrictions. Is the no-burn rule helping our particulate pollution?

The fireplace rule is really helping the particulate problem. The reason we did that rule was because our monitoring filters were showing that 30 percent of our pollution (on winter nights) ... comes from fireplaces. We've had ... no (violations for particulates known as PM 10) in the last three years since we've done the rule.

3. Does the technology exist to help reduce emissions and meet the 2013 ozone deadline?

It's looking very challenging at this point. We may find out that even if money is no object ... the technology may not be there right now to get us 400-tons-a-day reductions in emissions, which is at this point what we think we need.

4. You said we need money to solve the valley's air problem. What are the politics of getting that money?

Our analysis shows we need something on the order of \$500 million to \$1 billion a year to get the reductions that we need. Basically we're talking about money to convert old diesel engines to cleaner technology, cleaner fuel. We have to go to the state and federal government. Given the ... economic situation, with the deficits and so forth, it's going to be a difficult task.

As the San Joaquin Valley, I think we face some unique (fund-raising) challenges. The Legislature is dominated by Bay Area and Southern California politicians primarily paying attention to the ports. We need to organize, we need to marshal all of our resources ... to bring about any political pressure we can to come even close to what we need.

5. What are your thoughts on the fact that we continue to achieve air standards, only to have the targets move out of reach?

The thing to remember ... is that we cannot simply overlook all the work that has been done in the past to meet the old standards. Those old standards are based on very detailed studies that showed (exceeding them) had a detrimental impact on public health, premature deaths and a whole host of respiratory problems. So meeting those standards definitely improves the health and the air quality in the valley, but now we have better information that shows that we even need to do more.

Spare the Air

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

Today is a Spare the Air Day.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is forecasting an air quality index today in Tulare County of 135, considered unhealthy for sensitive groups.

Valley residents can help reduce and control air pollution levels by:

- Doing all your errands at once.
- Bringing your lunch to work.
- Carpooling or vanpooling.

BMW to road test hydrogen

Gannett News Service

In the Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

OXNARD - Instead of the far-off promise of cars propelled by pollution-free hydrogen fuel cells, BMW said Tuesday that it plans to field test cars that burn liquid hydrogen in their engines next year in the United States.

There's just one big catch.

When BMW launches a fleet of about 25 modified 7 Series sedans in the United States - among about 100 worldwide - the liquid hydrogen will have to be stored at more than 400 degrees below zero. And there are only a couple of liquid hydrogen pumps in the country.

The cars will be doled out to agencies or government officials for testing. None will be sold.

The cars will run on hydrogen or gasoline in their modified internal-combustion engines. They will be able to switch between fuels at the push of a button mounted on the steering wheel.

The bolted-in, 45-gallon liquid hydrogen tank will provide for a range of about 125 miles. The tank is designed to keep hydrogen cold for up to 17 hours. After that, it vents away as water vapor.

The lid's coming off

Cool temperatures, strong winds forecast

By Chris Bowman - Bee Staff Writer

Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

Relief is around the corner.

Today should mark the end of the double siege of smog and smoke that have enveloped the Sacramento region this week, resulting in area health alerts.

Breathing will get easier Thursday and on through the weekend as a cold low- pressure system drops into Northern California and bursts an atmospheric lid trapping close-to-the-ground pollutants and smoke from the Ralston timber fire near Foresthill, forecasters said.

The National Weather Service called the predicted drop "drastic."

Friday may make the top 10 list for the region's lowest temperatures on record for Sept. 15, the service's forecast said.

Westerly gusts up to 40 mph are expected to blow through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and across the Valley, sweeping pollutants away and repainting the skies blue.

"We are looking at big extremes here," said Tim Dye, who forecasts weather and smog for the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.

That will be a big relief from Tuesday's conditions, when the plume of smoke drifted heavily into Sacramento and the Elk Grove area for the first time since the outbreak of the Ralston fire on Sept. 5.

According to the California Air Resources Board, the concentration of airborne smoke particles in the region peaked between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Tuesday, but skies remained smoky all day.

Northerly afternoon winds redirected the plume from Folsom to the Elk Grove area, according to the Sacramento air district.

The gases in the smoke, combined with high temperatures and stagnant air, sent ozone levels soaring to a record high for this year's smog season in the six-county Sacramento area, air district officials said.

"The smoke is causing the ozone levels to rise. That's the only reason we are seeing these high ozone levels," said Lori Kobza, district spokeswoman.

Inhaled ozone, the main component of smog, sandpapers people's airways. The colorless gas aggravates respiratory infections and shortness of breath.

The air district issued a health alert shortly after 3 p.m., when ozone levels at an air monitor on Bruceville Road in Elk Grove registered 183 on the Air Quality Index: unhealthy for everyone.

The district cautioned against prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors and advised people to stay indoors. Placer County health officials had extended a health advisory they issued last week.

Communities in the foothills above Roseville and Folsom do not have air monitors that measure concentrations of breathable smoke particles.

But residents don't need a monitor to know conditions are unhealthy.

"I don't have allergies, but I try to stay inside so I don't have to breathe the smoke," said Kimberly Kruger of Auburn.

Fellow Auburn resident Karen Sullivan said the dark, smoky mornings are frightening.

"It makes you think the fire is getting closer to your home," she said Tuesday.

Today's forecast is basically a repeat of Tuesday's. It calls for highs in the middle 90s, stagnant and smoky air, and smog measuring 140 on the Air Quality Index -- unhealthy for children, the elderly and people with heart and respiratory diseases.

The Ralston fire is 30 miles uphill from Sullivan, between the forks of the American River in the Tahoe National Forest.

Downhill residents may feel as though the fire is approaching them because the steep river canyons and easterly nighttime winds funnel the smoke their way, Forest Service officials said.

The smoke is especially thick in the early morning, before rising temperatures have raised the lid of high pressure.

The invisible ridge also weakens and blocks out Pacific winds that would otherwise enter through the Delta and disperse the pollutants.

While the predicted breakup of the high-pressure system Thursday will help clear the air, the accompanying gusts will fan the flames of the fire, which is difficult enough to fight because of the steep terrain.

"We don't know what direction the wind will come. That's why it's important that we get a perimeter around the fire as best we can," said Timothy Evans, Forest Service spokesman.

As of Tuesday night, the fire, 10 miles east of Foresthill, had consumed a total of 7,191 acres. The fire was 48 percent contained and officials said the date for full containment is unknown.

"It's very treacherous country," he said.

Spare the Air today

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

The air in Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced counties is expected to be unhealthy today for sensitive groups — children, older adults and those with lung diseases. For that reason, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has declared a Spare the Air day, asking people to limit outdoor exertion, especially from 3 to 7 p.m., when ozone levels usually are highest. People also are asked to carpool, postpone using gas-powered yard equipment and not to ignite charcoal grills with lighter fluid. On the Net: www.valleyair.org.

Regional Roundup

'Spare the Air Day' in San Joaquin County

By [News-Sentinel Staff](#)

Lodi New Sentinel, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District advises Lodi-area residents to carpool and to postpone unnecessary car travel and using gas-power lawn equipment today.

The air pollution district has designated today as a Spare the Air Day from San Joaquin to Kern county.

Additionally, a wildfire in Placer County is expected to bring smoke to San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties today. The Ralston Fire, which began on Sept. 5, has grown to about 6,780 acres by Tuesday morning, according to the air pollution control district.

For more information, call (559) 230-5800 or online at <http://www.valleyair.org>.

Prices Fall, But Pain Remains

Motorists glum because an average of \$2.90 a gallon still isn't a bargain

by Ben van der MEER

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

You won't hear much cheering at service station gasoline pumps.

Sure, the price of fuel is finally starting to drop, but it isn't falling far enough or fast enough for most consumers.

Besides, the summer driving season is over. And though it's dropped below \$3 a gallon, it's still no bargain.

AAA of Northern California reported an average price of \$2.90 for a gallon of unleaded gasoline Tuesday, down 22cents from a month ago.

If motorists do have anything to cheer about, experts say it's that pump prices are likely to keep falling because several factors are swinging in consumers' favor.

"What's basically driving the drop in gas is the drop in the price of crude oil," said Rob Schlichting, a spokesman for the California Energy Commission.

He said a barrel of Alaska crude oil Monday was \$64.31 — the lowest price since April 4, when it was \$64.28. The record high was \$75.73 on July 14.

Schlichting said three factors that normally would drive oil and gas prices up — Middle East unrest, hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and problems with BP's Alaska pipeline — haven't been as bad as once feared.

He said gas prices on the wholesale and spot markets already have declined, down to about \$1.77 a gallon in the Bay Area.

Retail prices often lag behind, he explained. "There's still room for it to come down more," he said.

In Northern California, the average price was \$2.93, and the state as a whole paid an average of \$2.96, according to AAA's survey.

Elsewhere in the United States, gas stations Friday will begin to switch from the summertime [fuel blends that cut down on smog](#) during the year's hottest months but also add a chunk of change to the price at the pump.

The net effect could lead to a marginal drop in gas prices that are trending downward, analysts said.

Average gas prices dropped to about \$2.62 a gallon this week after reaching \$3.04 last month, the Department of Energy reported. The agency said it expects average prices of \$2.55 a gallon by winter, but some forecasters — including AAA — say such price levels are just weeks away.

The transition back to winter fuels often has a less dramatic impact on fuel prices.

"If there is any price effect, it will be dwarfed or masked by the changes caused by the drop in crude oil prices and a drop in gasoline demand," said Jonathan Cogan, spokesman for the Energy Information Administration.

Although California also uses reformulated gas in summer and winter, the state isn't affected much by that switch, Schlichting said.

Most West Coast states do not get gasoline from refineries in the rest of the nation, so the switch in blends elsewhere doesn't affect prices as much, he said.

Consumers filling up at the pump Tuesday said the lower prices are nice but still too high.

"I wish it would drop a little more," said Turlock's George Gonzalez, 30. He was getting gas in Modesto at the am-pm station at I and Sixth streets, where the price was \$2.75 a gallon.

"It used to be, what, \$2.30-something?" he said. "It's still \$2.75, \$2.76, that's still close to \$3."

California drivers feel less pain at the pump **Experts warn autumnal blessing might be short-term, very fragile**

by Tim Simmers

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006

Consumers got some relief at the gas pumps in the last few weeks, as prices fell a quarter or more and dropped below \$3 per gallon in most Bay Area communities, according to a new report.

Falling crude oil prices, relative calm in Iran and the Middle East, and good news on a pipeline problem in Alaska drove prices down, according to AAA of Northern California's monthly report

released Tuesday. Prices could drop another 30 cents or more per gallon in the next few months, oil industry analysts say.

Average prices statewide for regular unleaded gas fell to the lowest level in Tracy, down 34 cents from August to \$2.77 per gallon on Tuesday, AAA reported. They slid 20 cents to \$2.98 in San Mateo, dropped 25 cents to \$3 in Oakland and fell 19 cents to \$3.03 in San Francisco.

Statewide, the price per gallon fell 25 cents to \$2.96 per gallon.

"Right now the outlook is positive for consumers, but it's difficult to say how long current conditions will remain in place," said Sean Comey, spokesman for AAA of Northern California. "Unfortunately, some of the same market forces that drove prices down could reverse course and drive them up again."

Industry observers said prices should continue to ease downward through the fall — possibly down to \$2.50 or \$2.60 per gallon in California — but they warned that prices won't fall back to \$2 a gallon, and are likely to climb again in the winter and early spring.

Crude oil prices have fallen off their record pace, down more than \$10 per barrel in the last few weeks to less than \$64 per barrel. They hit a record \$78 a barrel in July. Crude oil is the raw material from which gas is made.

The price of Alaska North Slope oil, often used to make gas for California, peaked at a record \$75.63 per barrel on July 14, and fell to \$64.31 per barrel Monday.

"We're in for relatively cheap gas for a while, but the bad news is that probably won't continue through the spring," said Severin Borenstein, director of the University of California Energy Institute. He expects prices to drop to between \$2.50 and \$2.60 per gallon in the fall.

Refinery margins on gas have plummeted in the last few weeks, Borenstein said. They were up about 40 cents per gallon during the summer when demand for gas was high and supply was lower. As demand slackened and supply improved, margins have dropped considerably to about 10 cents per gallon, half of normal, he said.

Borenstein added that the price of crude oil on the futures market is \$63 for October and \$68 for next April, which spells a rise in gas prices in the spring. Rob Schlichting, spokesman for the California Energy Commission in Sacramento, also believes gas prices will continue to fall in the coming months.

"The wholesale price (of gas) has been dropping and it's got a little ways to drop," he said.

He believes prices could drop through the fall, but warned that "all bets are off" if something catastrophic happens like a hurricane, unrest in the Middle East or a big refinery problem.

Part of the good news of dropping prices is that the pipeline problem BP Plc had in early August in Alaska did not turn out to be as serious as it could have been.

Gas consumption is also declining because Americans tend to drive less after Labor Day than during the summer. Also, supplies of gas and oil are rising, according to the AAA report. Gas prices could slip even more as refiners start selling less-expensive winter blends later this week. Gas stations across the country are expected to start Friday to switch away from the summertime blends that help reduce smog during the hottest months of the year, but are a little more expensive.

The current average gas price in California is 8 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, when Hurricane Katrina drove prices up dramatically.

Throughout Northern California, the average price is \$2.93 per gallon. The average price in the Bay Area is \$2.97 per gallon.

Prices have been above \$3 per gallon since April, and set a statewide average record high of \$3.38 on May 18, the AAA report said.

The nationwide average price for regular unleaded is \$2.61 per gallon, down 39 cents from the previous AAA gas report on Aug. 15.

The highest price for gas in the continental U.S. is in the Southern California town of Blythe, where the average price is \$3.28. Gas prices hit \$3.61 in Wailuku, Hawaii.

"It's important that consumers continue to conserve energy," said Comey of AAA. "The cost of gas is not just a result of economic forces that are beyond your control. If we all make an effort to reduce the amount of fuel we use, it does help bring prices down."

Spokesman Tupper Hull of the Western States Petroleum Association also said the lower prices are due to falling crude oil prices:

"It would appear the significant decline in crude oil prices is being translated into lower prices at the pumps, and that is to be expected."

said Hull of the Western States Petroleum Association.

Large area chokes on smoke from Sierra fire Health officials urge residents downhill of blaze to stay inside.

By Chris Bowman - Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2006

The deeply carved forks of the American River have been delivering more than snowmelt lately down the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.

Every morning this past week, the American's three prongs also have ushered thick blankets of smoke from a hard-to-contain wildfire in the Tahoe National Forest to communities downhill, from Foresthill to Folsom.

Smoke, like water, rolls quite efficiently downhill through those steep river canyons.

"We have this incredible junction of all these rivers, and they're all acting as funnels for the smoke," said Carol Kennedy, a watershed specialist with the Tahoe National Forest. "They point straight at Auburn. And from there it's just a straight shot down into the valley."

To communities at the end of the smoke chute, it seems as though the blaze is in their neck of the woods. In fact, it's burning 35 miles away and more than 1,000 feet uphill.

On Monday -- day seven of the Ralston fire -- the smoke, combined with unhealthy levels of smog, prompted the Folsom Cordova Unified School District to keep students indoors.

"Because there was visible smoke and the smell of smoke, we advised principals, coaches and physical education teachers districtwide not to have outdoor activities," said Heather McGowan, district spokeswoman.

The Ralston fire grew to about 5,500 acres on Monday, from about 4,500 acres Sunday, according to the Forest Service.

With more than 1,300 firefighters and several helicopters on the scene, the fire was still only 15 percent contained, said Ann Westling, a Tahoe National Forest spokesperson.

The steepness of the terrain has proved the greatest obstacle to slowing the fire's progress. The job is expected to get tougher today through Thursday because westerly winds are forecasted to kick up to 25 mph to 30 mph.

To build up defenses, fire crews on Monday extended fire breaks and planned to set backfires.

"Over the next several days we could see a lot more smoke," Westling said.

As a result, Placer County health officials extended a health advisory they issued last week.

"If you can see or smell smoke, you should limit outdoor physical activities and strongly consider canceling outdoor sporting events and other group physical activities," said Dr. Richard Burton, the county health officer.

County health officials said they have seen no spike in respiratory or heart-related hospital admissions.

But air pollution regulators said they have received many calls from residents concerned about their health.

The smoke can cause long-term problems for children because their lungs are still developing, said Dr. Michael Mulligan, assistant county health officer. The elderly and those with pre-existing lung and heart problems also are vulnerable, he said.

To escape the smoke and ease her breathing, Jo-Anne Young, who lives near Foresthill, said she and her husband headed east to Carson City for a tour of the Nevada state Capitol only to find the wind had changed in an unfavorable direction.

"It blew away from our home and followed us up the Sierra," Young said.

The spread of smoke is an interplay of wind, weather, fire and topography, with river canyons playing a strong role.

In the evening, as the cold air sinks, it pulls the smoke with it into the river channels and downhill. Come early morning, and as the land warms up, the smoke rises and inundates communities downhill.

"Looking upstream, you could see the white smoke moving down the canyon," Westling said as she saw the scenario unfold early Monday morning from the Foresthill Bridge.

The smoke dissipates later as an inversion layer formed by a high pressure system lifts. The cycle repeats itself after sunset.

"It comes and goes, and when it comes it's pretty bad," Young said.

One Senator's Hot Air

Contra Costa Times

<http://www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/news/editorial/15498348.htm>

WHO WOULD THINK that efforts to protect the Earth we live on would garner such hostility? But California's passage of a landmark anti-global-warming legislation, seems to have set off Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla.

If he were anyone but a senator with some power -- he's head of the Environment and Public Works Committee -- he'd be on his dust farm throwing a tantrum. Instead he's pushing a bill that increases penalties for areas that don't meet strict soot and smog standards. There are only two such areas in the nation -- the Los Angeles basin and the San Joaquin Valley.

Inhofe's bill on ozone and particulate matter standards came just a week after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Legislature agreed on a bill to cap emissions on manmade greenhouse gases.

Inhofe has been clear on his opinion of manmade global warming, saying it could be "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." He was just as clear on what he thought of the California law: "feel-good legislation to appease liberal special-interest groups."

His measure, which could cost California its federal highway allocation if its requirements remain unsatisfied, seems very much like retaliation.

To be sure, we see these pollution problems specific to California as something that must be dealt with, and we know our legislators have not always been motivated to move on air quality changes that would most affect, and help, the San Joaquin region.

However, we also know efforts have been made, including regulation of agricultural sources of air pollution emissions. And we know that this state's efforts often outweigh any in the nation.

This is not the first time that California has taken a lead and demanded more from industry and businesses than the federal government. It won't be the last.

Why does this draw such a strong negative reaction from Inhofe? We hope Congress doesn't let his personal retaliation measure go beyond the committee room.

Air quality rule altered for mining City officials fear controls over dust to be weakened

By Judy O'Rourke, Staff Writer
LA Daily News Tues., Sept. 12, 2006

SANTA CLARITA - Despite pleas from city officials, air-quality regulators have revised a rule so that some mining activities will be conditionally allowed on windy days at quarries such as the proposed Cemex mine in Soledad Canyon.

Excavation would be prohibited, but materials could be loaded and shipped if dust-control measures specified by regulators were followed. A mine trade group welcomed the decision.

"The problem with the previous incarnation of the rule was the (mine) operator would have to know where the product was going," said Adam Harper, executive director of the California Mining Association.

Most trucks are privately owned. Mine operators do not know where they are headed, and drop-off sites could be changed en route, he said.

"It would be impossible for a mine operator to know `these are the right trucks and those are the wrong trucks,'" he said.

Rule 1157, which was adopted by the South Coast Air Quality Management District in January 2005, was designed to reduce particulate emissions from sand and gravel mines. It requires mine operators to cut dust from loading and unloading activities, equipment, storage and paved and unpaved roads at the facilities.

With the revision, excavation would be prohibited, unpaved roads would be sprayed with water twice an hour unless chemical dust suppressant is used, and loose mounds of material would be dampened shortly after the material is loaded.

The rule contains an exemption that would excuse some mine operators from meeting the standards during high winds under specified conditions.

The mine group sued the AQMD a month after the original rule was adopted in January 2005, saying it was hard to follow and would be difficult for the agency to enforce. A settlement reached by the two parties in September 2005 called for spelling out high-wind rules to permit loading and shipping materials if dust control standards are met.

The agency postponed a June hearing on the matter to weigh the city's concerns. Since then, the board was short of a quorum twice before it adopted the change Friday.

City government, which has spent nearly \$7 million battling the proposed 56.1-million-ton Cemex mine, championed passage of Rule 1157, and Travis Lange, the city's environmental services manager, questioned any changes.

"We don't want to see any watering down of the rule," he said. "We feel this amendment does that already, (and) we don't want to see any more of that."

He is concerned that the rule could be altered piecemeal, unraveling its benefits at the Cemex mine, expected to begin operating in 2008.

Laki Tisopulos, the AQMD's assistant executive officer for planning and rules, said the change streamlines and simplifies the measure's wording while accomplishing the same goal. He does not expect any more revisions.

"If additional amendments (are needed), we've committed to the city we will do a cumulative-impacts analysis to make sure nobody gets shortchanged," he said.

Tisopulos said he believes the revised rule will be the best of its kind countrywide.

"The companies have agreed during high winds they will be shutting down mining operations, which are very nasty operations," he said.

Town hall on air quality

By ERIN UY

The Orange County Register Mon., Sept. 11, 2006

A town hall meeting will be held to discuss the issues of air quality 6 p.m. Sept. 27, at the Ehlers Community Recreation Center, located 8150 Knott Avenue. The session, hosted by Buena Park and the South Coast Air Quality Management District will address local air quality, its affects on health, residents' concerns and ways to help keep the air clean. Information: 909-396-2250 or www.aqmd.gov <<http://www.aqmd.gov>>

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wed., Sept. 13, 2006:](#)

Reliance on autos dries up transit resources

John Crisp, from the oil state of Texas, opines that "America chose the automobile over other forms of transportation" and "our fondness for the automobile makes it the only conceivable mode of ground transportation for most people" [commentary Sept. 3].

He tantalizes us with descriptions of European travel (clean, safe, smooth, always on time) contrasted with how "dangerous, bloody, violent" driving is. We are scolded that "Had our society chosen public train travel" we could be enjoying the same privileges.

Had our society done what? When were we consulted when Standard Oil spearheaded the removal of railroad tracks across the nation? Or when President Eisenhower signed the Federal Highway Act and Congress provided funding for the enormous and now crumbling infrastructure?

This scenario made necessary our overpriced death traps gilded with chrome, rife with blind spots, unsafe at any speed. Oh, sure, we just love our cars and the pollution, too.

Worse, funds must be diverted from future transport to patch up highways. The bullet train proposal could be instrumental in making Fresno finally part of California. And oh, yes, let us travel European-style instead of supporting the oil and automotive industries.

Violet Koumrian Manes, Fresno

[Modesto Bee Editorial, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2006](#)

UC Merced seeks green recognition

The University of California at Merced wants to go green, and in the process can set a good example for all of us in the valley.

The campus is making huge efforts to conserve energy and resources, from water-saving devices in dormitory bathrooms to biodegradable plates in the university dining commons. They're even installing carpets made from recycled soda bottles. More than three-quarters of UC Merced's construction debris has been recycled.

The goal is to win the U.S. Green Building Council's "silver standard," a measure of environment-friendly operations that, according to UC Merced officials, no American university has met. The council awards points for various steps to reduce energy and resource consumption. It takes 33 points to win the silver standard.

Buildings close to public transportation win a point, using recycled construction materials is worth five and installing waterless urinals gets three points.

The commitment to a green operation is part of a larger promise from the university system that the Merced campus would have a strong focus on environmental issues. That's appropriate in a valley with air quality and other environmental problems long thought by many to be intractable.

It doesn't come cheap, at least at first. As is typical with new technologies, such devices and processes are often more expensive than their traditional counterparts. But in the long run, energy and materials costs will only go up, shortening the time that savings in those areas amortize the initial cost of all the new green technology.

It's the path to the future, and it's appropriate and laudable that UC Merced, part of a magnificent system of research universities, should be a leader.

Our Point

Our new UC campus is an ideal place to save energy and reduce environmental impacts; it sets an example for students, staff and the valley.

[Note: The following clip discusses the link researchers have discovered between human activities to rising ocean temperatures in hurricane forming regions](#)

Los gases que sobrecalientan la tierra también empeoran huracanes

La evidencia del Livermore, CA, demuestra que hay huracanes que crea el ser humano por inconciencia al alterar con contaminación constante la armonía que necesita el planeta

Noticiero Latino, Aire Libre, Fresno, CA

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Científicos del Laboratorio Nacional Livermore de California descubrieron que los gases industriales que afectan la salud de las personas y sobrecalientan la tierra sirven además como combustible para los huracanes.

De acuerdo con ese laboratorio que administra la Universidad de California, y con la Universidad Estatal de Colorado, la contaminación industrial altera tanto la salud humana como el clima y los fenómenos climatológicos.

La evidencia del Livermore demuestra que hay huracanes que crea el ser humano por inconciencia al alterar con contaminación constante la armonía que necesita el planeta.