

Warming, pollution combine for deadly effects, study finds

By Alex Breitler, staff writer

Stockton Record, Thursday, January 10, 2007

Climate change is killing hundreds of people each year in California by adding to air pollution in hot spots like the San Joaquin Valley, according to a new study by a Stanford University scientist.

The study, announced last week, was said to be the first to link increased emissions of carbon dioxide, the most prominent greenhouse gas, with human mortality.

Climate change, in other words, isn't just about melting ice caps, rising sea levels and shrinking snowpack. It's about our everyday health.

Cutting carbon

The news that carbon dioxide emissions contribute to deadly air pollution may be disheartening, but there are easy ways to cut down on your carbon "footprint."

- Drive less. Even a 15-mile reduction in driving each week reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 900 pounds over the course of a year.
- Tune up your car and make sure your tires are properly inflated.
- Do some of your laundry in cold or warm water instead of hot water, and hang clothes out to dry.
- Replace old incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs.

- **Source:** California Air Resources Board

"Some people have said you don't inhale climate change," said Mark Jacobson, a professor of civil and environmental engineering who authored the study. "This study says you do inhale the effects" of warmer temperatures.

This should be considered by the Environmental Protection Agency, he said, which recently decided not to allow California to set its own emission standards. That decision was based in part on the EPA's argument that climate change is a widespread phenomenon and that national, not state, standards are needed.

To the contrary, California is likely to "bear an increasingly disproportionate burden of death," Stanford University said in an announcement of Jacobson's study. The state is home to some of the nation's smoggiest cities.

Humans emit large quantities of carbon dioxide, mostly from their cars and from burning other fossil fuels, like coal. That carbon dioxide and other gases act like a blanket, trapping heat from the sun in the atmosphere.

One consequence is an increase in ozone pollution. Ozone is formed when other gases belched from automobiles mix and cook in the hot summer sun. The hotter the sun, the worse the ozone.

The worse the ozone, the greater the health impact on those who breathe that tainted air.

While Stockton's ozone isn't as severe as the southern San Joaquin Valley's, the Valley as a whole is not in compliance with federal ozone standards.

"(Jacobson's study) is very relevant to the Valley," said Kevin Hamilton, a respiratory therapist with the Valley-based Medical Advocates for Healthy Air. "We shouldn't underestimate how many vulnerable people there are out there."

It's not news that air pollution in California kills. The state's Air Resources Board estimates 8,800 Californians suffer premature death due to air pollution each year.

Jacobson says that as Earth's temperature has warmed in past decades, roughly 800 U.S. deaths per year can be blamed on air pollution specifically caused by global warming. About 30 percent of those, or roughly 240, take place in California.

And things will get worse, he says. For every 1.8-degree hike in the future, the resulting air pollution would cause about 1,000 additional deaths nationwide and about 20,000 deaths worldwide.

One critic challenged Jacobson's results.

If climate change has already worsened air pollution, causing hundreds of deaths each year, why is the air generally cleaner than it has been in decades past? Also, many ozone-forming pollutants have been cut as vehicle technology improves, said Joel Schwartz, a Sacramento-based scientist with the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute.

"Without that context, the study really amounts to fear mongering," he said. "It doesn't jive with real experience over the last 30 years."

Jacobson's study, accepted for publication late last month

Florez wants to keep Case off air board

Senator opposes Fresno County supervisor's selection to state panel.

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau

Fresno Bee, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- Fresno County Supervisor Judy Case is facing a fight over her appointment to a powerful state board that sets air pollution regulations.

Upset over her recent votes on a Valley air-quality plan, state Sen. Dean Florez and environmental activists say they will seek to block her confirmation to the California Air Resources Board when she comes before a state Senate committee this month.

"I don't think she's the clean-air advocate that we need on the board," said Florez, a Shafter Democrat who wields significant influence in the Legislature on air-quality issues.

But Case has plenty of supporters in her corner.

"I don't think it's constructive to play politics with the confirmation," said Pete Weber, a Fresno civic leader. "I think she has been a very thoughtful board member."

Case, who also serves on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board, was appointed to the state board in May by Gov. Schwarzenegger and took her seat soon after. Case replaced retired Kern County Supervisor Barbara Patrick in the slot reserved for a member of the Valley air board.

Case's initial hearing before the Senate Rules Committee is scheduled for Jan. 23. She can serve until May 30 without being confirmed by the full Senate.

The Democratic-controlled Senate could oust her before then with a simple majority vote. This option is rarely used, but Florez said he would seek to force her immediate departure.

Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, who leads the rules committee, does not comment on appointees before their confirmation hearings, his office said.

Case said she has the support of a number of elected officials, including Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, and Assembly Republican Leader Mike Villines of Clovis.

"If Senator Florez has specific concerns, I'd be happy to talk to him about it," she said.

Air-quality activists are upset that Case twice voted to delay the deadline of a smog cleanup plan for the Valley, one of the worst air basins in the nation.

The Valley air board last year set a 2024 date, more than a decade beyond the initial deadline set by the federal government.

The state board, with Case as a member, later approved the plan by a 7-1 vote.

Schwarzenegger blasted the approval and vowed to push for more aggressive action.

Case's supporters said she helped lead a task force that strengthened the air plan to respond to the criticism.

But the state board decided not to change the 2024 target date, saying that existing technology did not allow for enough pollution reductions.

The governor is standing by his appointment of Case, a registered nurse who grew up on a family farm in Sanger.

"As a Fresno County resident and health-care expert and elected official, Judy Case is well qualified to make a significant contribution to the California Air Resources Board's national air-quality leadership, beginning in the Central Valley," said Rachel Cameron, a spokeswoman for the governor.

But Florez accused her of too often siding with agriculture interests.

"She always is ... using the argument that we have to ask business first whether they can afford something and then think about health issues later," he said.

Valley air board officials say the region's air can probably be cleaned up by 2020 or sooner, but that the federal government won't accept a plan that includes methods not rigorously proven.

Activists want quicker action and have called for the Valley board to enact tougher regulations such as banning pollution-spewing vehicles on smoggy days.

The board, which sets air pollution rules for the state, will take on an increasing role in coming years as the state implements new laws to curb greenhouse gas emissions -- rules that could affect agriculture.

Valley air activists are lobbying for Case to be replaced on the state board by Arvin City Council Member Raji Brar or one of four new members who will soon join the Valley board.

The four slots were created last year with legislation pushed by environmentalists. Two yet-to-be named city appointees will be added, and the governor will appoint two medical experts.

Recommendations have been made, but the Governor's Office is still sifting through applications.

District to add safer school buses

By Kimberlina Rocha

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2008

Riding the school bus is going to be safer for some Visalia students after the Visalia Unified School District board of trustees approved the purchase of four schools buses equipped with three-point seat belts.

The buses will be a first for the Visalia district, which has no seat belts on its large buses.

The board awarded a bid of \$623,916 to A-Z Bus Sales Inc. that will be funded through grants from the California Department of Transportation and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"From the outside they won't look any different," Terry White, director of administrative services for the school district, said before the meeting.

The 40-foot-long buses will seat only 65 passengers - each of whom will have a lap-and-shoulder seat belt - compared to 85 in the large buses the district now owns, White said.

That's because the new buses will have thicker padding that will cut down on seating but give the students aboard more room to themselves, he added.

Since July 1 of last year, new buses have to be built with seat belts under California law, White said.

"Seat belts are a new thing in school buses," he said. "We'll see how they are."

White said after the school board meeting that the new buses also will be eco-friendly and powered by natural gas.

Now that the bus purchases are authorized, White said they should be ready to pick up students some time in February.

Because they have less seating capacity, he added that the buses most likely will run on routes that have 65 passengers or less.

Also on the agenda

In other matters, the board:

- Recognized 20 students for the district's Student Achievement Awards in visual and performing arts, English, industrial technology and overall achievement.
- Approved an agreement between the school district and the Tulare County Organization for Vocational Education to provide vocational training for students during the 2007-08 school year.
- Renewed an agreement with the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency to provide case-management services to pregnant teens and teen parents through the Cal-Learn and Adolescent Family Life Support Team programs.

Britain Backs New Nuclear Power Plants

By Jill Lawless, The Associated Press
Washington Post Thursday, January 10, 2008

LONDON -- The British government on Thursday announced support for the construction of new nuclear power plants, backing atomic energy as a clean source of power to fight climate change. Business Secretary John Hutton told lawmakers that nuclear power "should have a role to play in this country's future energy mix, alongside other low-carbon sources." He said nuclear energy was a "tried and tested, safe and secure" source of power.

Hutton said the new plants would be paid for by private energy companies, not the government, and that most would be built on the sites of existing stations.

"I am inviting energy companies today to bring forward plans to build and operate new nuclear power stations," he said.

Environmental groups condemned the decision, saying nuclear power was dangerous and would divert resources from developing renewable energy sources.

"We need energy efficiency, cleaner use of fossil fuels, renewables and state of the art decentralized power stations like those in Scandinavia. That's the way to defeat climate change and ensure energy security," said John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace.

Nuclear power stations produce around 20 percent of Britain's electricity, but all but one are due to close by 2023.

Hutton said he hoped the first of the new plants would be up and running "well before" 2020.

He said there would be no cap on the amount of energy that could be generated from nuclear power, but said the government would invest in developing other renewable energy sources.

The government has promised to cut emissions of environmentally damaging greenhouse gases by 60 percent of 1990 levels by 2050, and sees nuclear power as part of a mix of clean and renewable energy sources that includes wave and wind power.

In making Thursday's announcement, Prime Minister Gordon Brown's government came down firmly on the pro-nuclear side of a debate that has divided opinion in Britain and across Europe.

Hutton argued that atomic energy was a boon both for the environment and for national security. Britain will move from producing most of its own energy to having to import much of its oil and gas by 2020, and the government has warned of the risk of becoming reliant on imports from less stable parts of the world.

"Set against the challenges of climate change and security of supply, the evidence in support of new nuclear power stations is compelling," Hutton said.

Tata Unveils World's Cheapest Car

By Gavin Rabinowitz, The Associated Press

Washington Post and other papers, Thursday, January 10, 2008

NEW DELHI -- India's Tata Motors on Thursday unveiled the world's cheapest car, bringing new mobility within the reach of tens of millions of people and nightmares to environmentalists, traffic engineers and safety advocates.

Company Chairman Ratan Tata, introducing the Nano _ price tag \$2,500 _ during India's main auto show, drove onto a stage in a white version of the tiny four-door subcompact, his head nearly scraping the roof.

With a snub nose and a sloping roof, it can fit five people _ if they squeeze. And the basic version is spare: there's no radio, no passenger-side mirror and only one windshield wiper. If you want air conditioning to cope with India's brutal summers, you need to get the deluxe version.

But it's cheap. The Nano's closest competitor here is the Maruti 800, a four-door that sells for nearly twice as much.

Tata, however, is targeting people moving up from the lower ends of India's transportation spectrum, where two-wheeled scooters selling for as little as \$900 are often crammed with entire families.

While the price has created a buzz, critics say the Nano could lead to possibly millions more automobiles hitting already clogged Indian roads, [adding to mounting air and noise pollution](#) problems. Others have said Tata will have to sacrifice quality and safety standards to meet the target price.

The chairman, though, insists the car will meet safety standards and pollute even less than motorcycles, passing domestic and European emission standards and averaging about 50 miles

per gallon. Girish Wagh, who headed the design team, said it had an oxidation catalytic convertor and it emitted 120 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometer.

Chief U.N. climate scientist Rajendra Pachauri, who shared last year's Nobel Peace Prize, said last month that "I am having nightmares" about the prospect of the low-cost car.

"Dr. Pachauri need not have nightmares," Ratan Tata said at the unveiling. "For us it's a milestone and I hope we can make a contribution to the country."

The basic model will sell for 100,000 rupees, but analysts estimate that customers could pay 20 percent to 30 percent more than that to cover taxes, delivery and other charges.

Shoppers: It's BYO bag in China

By Christopher Bodeen, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa Times, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008

BEIJING-Declaring war on the "white pollution" choking its cities, farms and waterways, China is banning free plastic shopping bags and calling for a return to the cloth bags of old - steps largely welcomed by merchants and shoppers on Wednesday.

The measure eliminates the flimsiest bags and forces stores to charge for others, making China the latest nation to target plastic bags in a bid to cut waste and conserve resources.

Beijing residents appeared to take the ban in stride, reflecting rising environmental consciousness and concern over skyrocketing oil prices.

"If we can reduce waste and save resources, then it's good both for us and the whole world," said college student Xu Lixian, who was buying tangerines out of cardboard boxes at a sidewalk stall.

The ban takes effect June 1, barely two months before Beijing hosts the Summer Olympic Games, ahead of which it has been demolishing run-down neighborhoods and working to clear smog. The games have added impetus to a number of policies and projects, likely boosting odds for the bag ban's implementation.

Under the new rules, businesses will be prohibited from manufacturing, selling or using bags less than 0.025 millimeters (0.00098 inches) thick, according to the order issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet. The council's orders constitute the highest level of administrative regulation and follow-through is carefully monitored.

More durable plastic bags still will be permitted for sale by markets and shops.

The regulation, dated Dec. 31 and posted on a government Web site Tuesday, called for "a return to cloth bags and shopping baskets to reduce the use of plastic bags."

It also urged waste collectors to step up recycling efforts to reduce the amount of bags burned or buried. Finance authorities were told to consider tax measures to discourage plastic bag production and sale.

Internationally, legislation to discourage plastic bag use has been passed in parts of South Africa, Ireland and Taiwan, where authorities either tax shoppers who use them or impose fees on companies that distribute them. Bangladesh already bans them, as do at least 30 remote Alaskan villages.

Last year, San Francisco became the first U.S. city to ban petroleum-based plastic bags in large grocery stores. In France, supermarket chains have begun shying away from giving away plastic bags and German stores must pay a recycling fee if they wish to offer them. Ireland's surcharge on bags imposed in 2003 has been credited with sharply reducing demand.

The elderly proprietor of a combined clothing shop and grocery shop, who gave only his surname, Wang, said the Chinese measure could reduce sales initially but would be beneficial in the long run.

"It's a bother, but these bags really do create a lot of pollution, so it should be a good thing," said Wang. He said the measure would make little difference to his costs since he spends just 10 yuan (\$1.35) a month on bags.

Xu, the college student, said the move showed China was serious about joining global efforts to stem environmental deterioration.

"I think this really shows that China is being a responsible country," said the 21-year-old.

Employees at larger supermarkets and convenience stores said they were unclear on the measure and did not know what their employers' response would be.

The regulation comes as Beijing steps up efforts to fight pollution that has accompanied China's breakneck economic growth. Factories and plants that churn out low-cost products for the world's consumers have severely fouled the country's air and water.

The order continues a years-old campaign against plastic waste, or "white pollution," that initially targeted the plastic foam lunch boxes whose decaying shells were once ubiquitous in China.

Shopkeepers started handing out cheap, flimsy plastic bags to customers about 15 years ago, roughly the same time that China shifted from being a net oil exporter to being a net importer. In recent years, large Western or Japanese-style supermarkets have begun to supplant traditional markets, eliminating the need for shoppers to bring their own bags.

"Our country consumes a huge amount of plastic shopping bags each year," the State Council said in a statement.

"While plastic shopping bags provide convenience to consumers, this has caused a serious waste of energy and resources and environmental pollution because of excessive usage, inadequate recycling and other reasons," the statement said.

Plastic shopping bags are given out with even the smallest items, although the statement gave no estimates as to the specific number of bags consumed in China or the potential savings in terms of the petroleum used to produce them.

Jennifer Turner, director of the China Environment Forum at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, said China's solid waste is at "a crisis level."

"Their landfills are reaching capacity and will be full in 13 years," she said, adding that a ban like this could be a significant way to educate the public about China's environmental issues.

In the United States, which has less than one-quarter of China's 1.3 billion people, the Sierra Club's Sierra magazine estimates almost 100 billion plastic bags are thrown out each year. The Sierra Club estimated that if every one of New York City's 8 million people used one less grocery bag per year, it would reduce waste by about 218,000 pounds.

In New York on Wednesday, the City Council approved a bill requiring large stores to provide bins for recycling plastic bags. The stores must also use bags that read: "Please return this bag to a participating store for recycling." Mayor Michael Bloomberg supports the measure and is expected to sign it.

China's move won praise from environmental organizations including Greenpeace, which issued a statement welcoming the ban.

"The State Council's announcement to ban free plastic bags is a perfect case to combine the two of the major forces in environment protection: public participation and government policy guidance," Greenpeace said.

Christopher Flavin, president of Worldwatch Institute, an independent research organization in Washington, said "China is ahead of the U.S. with this policy."

"They have had problems enforcing programs in the past, but this is easy to enforce because it has to be implemented on the retail level," Flavin said. "It won't be 100 percent on the first day, but in general, if you come back a year from now you will find this will be enforced and in place."

[Modesto Bee Commentary, Thursday, January 10, 2008:](#)

Tim Johnson: Be green! That's an order!

BEIJING — Anyone who doubts that China can overcome its severe - even dire - environmental problems should take a look at its new policy to ban the use of some plastic shopping bags.

In a simple fiat Wednesday, the State Council banned production of the ultra-thin bags and told stores that as of June 1 they can no longer hand them out to shoppers for free.

"Our country consumes huge amounts of plastic bags every year. While providing convenience to consumers, they have also caused serious pollution, and waste of energy and resources, because of excessive use and inadequate recycling," the council said in a brief statement.

Reuters says China uses up to 3 billion plastic bags a day.

"We should encourage people to return to carrying cloth bags, using baskets for their vegetables," the State Council notice said.

Whoa! This isn't encouragement. This is strong-arm force. Go into a supermarket after June 1, and I bet you won't find those thin plastic bags. That's the strength of decisions in an authoritarian state. Within that strength may lie the seeds of rapid improvement of environmental woes.

In countries with broader democratic processes, you'd have lobbyists, libertarians, ordinary consumers and business interests all debating such a proposal on end, struggling for balance between individual rights, business necessities and environmental objectives.

Not in China. A snap of the fingers here shortcuts all debate.

Could it be that authoritarian policies ultimately prove friendly to the environment?

That may be going too far. But I recall sitting down with a U.S. environmentalist visiting China a while back who suggested China could quickly get on the right environmental course. He said that rapid implementation of certain policies could bring dramatic improvements. He noted London in the 1950s as an example.

In the industrial age, London relied heavily on coal for heat and power, making for noxious "pea-soup" smog blankets. As recently as 1952, a particularly bad December smog led to 4,000 premature deaths.

Then came a series of clean-air acts that led to a "smokeless" London, and much clearer skies. And all that was done in a democracy. Imagine how fast China could move if its leaders so saw fit.

A few more snaps of the finger might be in order in China.

[Tri-Valley Herald editorial, Wednesday, January 9, 2008:](#)

Fighting pollution is everyone's job

IT HAS long been known that air pollution negatively affects people's health and often leads to premature deaths. It's believed to lead to respiratory problems and heart attacks. Everything from microscopic airborne dust, which can damage lungs, to "dirty" electrical power to ozone pollution can be an issue.

While some bicker about the truth of global warming, there is no doubt, no argument, that too much of a good and necessary thing is dangerous. Too much carbon dioxide in the air disrupts the balance of the ecosystem and is toxic. A new study from Stanford University links CO₂ in the air to human deaths.

No matter where one sides in the global warming argument, everyone should be for less pollution. There should be no debate that humans cause a great deal of pollutants or that, with a concerted effort, can lessen it.

We can demand better from industries, but we must do better individually. The greatest source of emissions is from personal vehicles.

Regardless of one's position in the warming debate, being conscious of our "carbon footprint" is a step that protects health — ours, our children's and many as-yet-unborn children's — through the reduction of carbon pollution.

It can start with the purchase of a new vehicle, one that uses less fuel and uses it more efficiently. It can include support of the development of alternatives to oil-based fuels.

But it can start even smaller. Turn off lights when they're not being used. Turn down the heat by a degree or two; turn down your water heater setting by a couple of degrees. Hang your laundry instead of tumble drying. Walk or jog instead of driving to the gym. None of those cost a thing and will actually save money. Many other ways exist to reduce energy use, as well as ways to offset carbon pollution; it's just a matter of believing you can make a difference and wanting to do it.

Pollution is real, undeniable and deadly. It is every human's problem and concern.

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008:](#)

Global warming is summer

It is fair to feel that if you are reading this opinioned item that you are able to read. Now comes the real test: Can you think?

All indications are that this nation is hanging in a precarious balance. Our dollar is decreasing in world value. China, Saudi Arabia and others are holding trillions of unpaid U.S. notes. Fuel prices are too high, but as a nation we are sitting on the greatest oil reserves in the world but the environmentalists block our own drilling.

Two miles west of Delano exists a gas pocket that could supply most of the three state area in smog-free electric power generating, heating and all the natural gas uses already acceptable. Irrigation water is to be wasted to the ocean and to save some fish that don't supply a pound of food. Our lumber industry and the Forestry Service can't economically manage our forests. And now comes global warming. We have never seen such a hoax accepted worldwide before, and this reveals the danger we face.

There are millions of civilized sheep that can't see that support for industry-destroying environmentalists have just about destroyed us economically. We have an election year ahead of us. Vote for candidates who will develop our own resources, curtail Marxist-inspired education and cut the pork added to bills presented by liberal spendthrifts.

To me global warming is summer time.

Howard Neilsen, Delano

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a study released by Stanford University which links carbon dioxide emissions to increased deaths. For more information, contact Maricela at \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

Es fatal la contaminación en el Valle de San Joaquín: Universidad de Stanford

Noticiero Latino, Fresno, California
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008

Un nuevo estudio de la Universidad de Stanford aseguró que la combinación de los efectos del cambio climático y la contaminación continua del aire se vuelven fatales en regiones como el Valle de San Joaquín, en California, donde ocasionan muertes de residentes.

El autor del análisis, Mark Jacobson advirtió que algunas áreas como el Valle en California, pueden "cargar con una crecientemente desproporcionada mortalidad" por la combinación del llamado efecto invernadero y el deterioro del aire.

El estudio menciona que esos dos factores combinados ocasionan cientos de muertes anuales en California.

Otras investigaciones similares se enfocaron antes en los puertos marítimos como focos de contaminación fatal.