

## **Dust warning issued**

Fresno Bee, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Regional air authorities are advising San Joaquin Valley residents to spend more time indoors today and avoid strenuous activities or heavy exertion as gusty winds stir up dust.

Such particle pollution can aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma and increase risk of respiratory infections. This pollution also has been linked to heart attacks, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice, said the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Officials added that older adults and children are particularly sensitive to dust and other air pollution.

Details: [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or (559) 230-6000.

## **Air district warns of blowing dust**

The Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Local air pollution officials are warning that gusty winds in the San Joaquin Valley may blow dust around and exacerbate health problems.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District advisory covers Tuesday through Wednesday evening in the valley portion of Kern County. The high concentrations of what's called PM 10, or small particulate matter, can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis plus increase risk of respiratory infections.

It also says: "In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias.

"People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion."

## **Warning issued over air quality**

Stockton Record Wed., April 30, 2008

MODESTO - Air quality cops issued a health warning for Tuesday afternoon and today in the San Joaquin Valley, blaming gusty winds for stirring dust into the air.

The dust is made up of tiny particles that can pierce people's lungs and exacerbate existing health problems.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District recommends that:

- Older adults and children avoid prolonged exposure to the air, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.
- Everyone considers reducing such activities or exertion.
- People with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice.

The warning extends through tonight. Wind gusts close to 30 mph were possible late Tuesday, with speeds reducing to near 20 mph today, the National Weather Service reported.

## **Nurses join anti-refinery chemical campaign**

The Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Some Bakersfield nurses have joined a group opposing the proposed use of a controversial chemical at Big West's refinery on Rosedale Highway.

They're aligning with Bakersfield Citizens Against Hydrofluoric Acid, whose members include concerned residents and people from the Kern County Firefighters union. State Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, also opposes using HF at the refinery, which is proposed to be expanded.

"Anyone who comes into contact with this acid can experience excruciating pain, severe burns, pulmonary edema and worse," Rachel Carver, a nurse at Memorial Hospital, said in a news release Tuesday. "Our emergency response system is under tremendous pressure as it is. This is the last thing Bakersfield needs."

The nurses, according to spokeswoman Betsy Ramsey, are backed by the California Nurses Association.

Bakersfield Citizens Against Hydrofluoric Acid is trying to convince the refinery to abandon plans to use modified hydrofluoric acid in favor of sulfuric acid.

Refinery officials maintain the modified chemical is safe and its risks are no greater than sulfuric acid.

Hydrofluoric acid gained a bad reputation after several deadly releases at U.S. refineries in the 1980s and 1990s. It can form a ground-hugging cloud when spilled that can travel for several miles. Modified HF contains an additive that reduces the chemical's ability to vaporize by up to 80 percent.

Experts widely agree that modified HF and sulfuric acid are safer than pure HF. But there is no clear consensus on whether one of them is safer than the other.

## **Hanford ethanol plant faces lawsuit**

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, April 29, 2008

A citizens group advocating for better air quality has gone to court to try to stop a proposed ethanol manufacturing plant in the Valley, including one just approved in Hanford. Great Valley Ethanol, a fledgling

Bakersfield company, wants to build a 63-million-gallon grain ethanol plant on Iona and 10th avenues in the low-tax south Hanford industrial park. The company has a plan for a similar plant in Wasco. Both projects have recently been approved for construction.

As expected, the Association of Irrigated Residents simultaneously is suing the city of Hanford and the city of Wasco, challenging the approvals of these two plants. The suit was filed on April 17.

The group, comprising Kings and Kern County residents, alleges the violation of the California Environmental Quality Act saying that the city of Hanford analysis of greenhouse gas emissions and mobile source pollution associated with the plant was inadequate. Allegations are similar in the suit against Wasco.

"These food-to-fuel facilities are being built because of heavy taxpayer subsidies," Tom Frantz, a Shafter farmer and president of the group, said. "At the least, they must not make our air quality worse if they are to build such controversial operations in our polluted air basin."

The lawsuit in Hanford, like the one in Wasco, seeks a court injunction of the project and seeks court injunction to get the city to conduct a more detailed air emission analysis.

"We want more details on the emissions and the amount of emissions being offset," Frantz said. "We don't think we were given the whole picture."

These concerns stem from the fact that the plant in Hanford would create 313,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions and above-threshold nitrogen oxide emissions and use more than 1 million gallons of water a day, which is nearly one-tenth of an average amount of water produced by the city.

The city council approved the project adopting a statement of overriding considerations that the benefits outweigh the negative impacts that are found to be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation measures have been adopted in an attempt to address these issues, however.

Great Valley Ethanol would pay the Kings County Water District for any water usage exceeding the historical use of water for agriculture on the property. The company has also signed a deal with the Attorney

General's Office to pay \$1 million over three years to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's mitigation fund.

But the opposition group is questioning whether these mitigations are enough.

In response to the lawsuits, city officials expressed a dismay regarding the lawsuit but said it was expected.

"We're disappointed but not surprised," said Hanford City Attorney Robert Dowd. "It's a most worthy project. We'd like it to be moving forward at this time. But the lawsuit is not a surprise because of the comments presented during the public hearing."

Dowd said the allegations in the lawsuit are baseless.

"I don't believe there has been any violation of law during the proceedings," he said. "(The city council) has done nothing inappropriate in the proceedings."

Franz' group is represented by the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE), a San Francisco-based environmental justice legal organization.

CRPE officials could not be reached Monday for comment.

The company has said it would hope to begin construction in June or July and bring the plant operation on line by the end of 2009.

## **Blowing dust prompts health warning**

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Tuesday's blowing dust prompted a health warning from Valley air officials.

Dust exposure can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis and increase risk of respiratory infections, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District said.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has also linked dust pollution to heart attacks and

arrhythmias in people with heart disease.

The district said people with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality.

Additionally, air officials advise older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

Prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion should be avoided. The warning will be in affect until Wednesday evening.

## **Lindsay's police, fire fleet goes green with addition of hybrid SUVs**

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

LINDSAY - Next time you're driving through this city a bit over the speed limit and a cute, little sport utility vehicle pulls up behind you with its blue light flashing, you'd better pull over because it's a real police car.

It's one of 22 Toyota Highlander hybrids that the city of Lindsay began buying in 2006, 17 of which were converted to fire department and police patrol vehicles.

That's right - a small SUV and a hybrid, to boot. Not a Ford Crown Victoria or a Chevrolet Caprice or one of the large muscle cars traditionally used by police agencies.

In fact, police officials here say that as far as they know, their department is the first in the country to use Highlanders as police vehicles, and other departments from Colorado to Alaska have been inquiring as to how the vehicles are working.

So far, it's going well, even though the idea of buying small, hybrid SUVs to replace the department's Crown Victorias didn't go over well at first when city officials suggested it during labor negotiations with officers in 2004, Senior Police Sgt. Jerry Martinez said.

One of the requests the officers had was that Lindsay buy enough police cars that officers could take home at the end of the day rather than swapping out the same small group of cars over the course of three shifts each day.

"The cars could be running 24 hours a day, and we were constantly cleaning them out" of paperwork, spare rifles or shotguns, ammunition and other items, as well as swapping out each officer's portable computer as the next shift took possession of the car, Martinez said.

And the officers maintained that being able to take the cars home also would cut down on wear from being used around the clock, he added.

The city agreed - sort of.

Rather than offering to buy new Crown Victorias or similar cars, officials suggested the hybrid vehicles, which could be purchased largely with grant money, much of which was for buying low-pollution vehicles.

Right off the bat, Lindsay officers had concerns about whether the small SUVs had the speed and durability to handle the demands of patrol work. There even were concerns about whether they would have room for all the police equipment and enough back seat space for people in custody and the metal cages separating them from the officers.

Then there was the hybrid issue, Martinez said. "We thought it was a golf cart because it was battery operated."

Hybrids use a combination of gas and battery-powered motors, significantly reducing their gas mileage compared to standard gas-only cars.

But then Lindsay police Chief Burt Garzeli was all for buying the hybrids and convinced his officers that going with the city's plan would work out and save the department money, as the Highlanders' gas mileage was 27-30 miles per gallon compared to the Crown Victorias' 10-14 mpg, Martinez said.

### **Funding the fleet**

Buying the cars proved to be a challenge, however, as Highlander hybrids were in such demand back then that Lindsay city officials couldn't find an individual vendor with the 15 police, three fire department and four city cars the city wanted to buy, nor could they get a fleet price.

And the city couldn't wait because it had a deadline to spend the grant money, so the city took what cars it could get between October and December 2005, some loaded with features normally not needed for public service vehicles, including high-end stereo systems, six-disc CD players and a rear-seat DVD viewing system, Martinez said.

"We took whatever was available."

They ended up costing about \$836,000, with an additional \$261,000 to equip 17 of the 18 police and fire vehicles with cages, radios and equipment, and the price tag came to about \$1.097 million.

But \$1.029 million of that cost was covered by grant money, leaving a difference of more than \$127,200 that the Lindsay paid for with general fund money, according to data provided by the city.

One of the 15 police vehicles was not outfitted with special equipment because it is used by dispatchers and other public safety staff to run errands and conduct other city business.

### **Installing the gear**

As for getting the SUVs ready for police and firefighters, that had its challenges, said Martinez, who oversaw installation of the radios and other equipment.

One lucky break was that the light bars for Crown Victorias fit on top of the Highlanders.

But most of the other off-the-shelf equipment for police cars wouldn't work for the Highlanders, so local welders were hired to make from scratch the backseat cages along with brackets to hold police radios and patrol officers' computers.

One cage had to be made to fit the frame of the department's tallest officer, Capt. Rich Wilkinson, Martinez added.

"I love it," Wilkinson said of the Highlander he drives.

And when it all was done, the officers fit, there was enough room for all their equipment and they had room for people in custody in the back seats, though it is slightly cramped, he said. "It is a little harder to get uncooperative inmates in."

A pleasant surprise was that the Highlanders actually are faster than the Crown Victoria, as their electric engines kick in at high speeds, which "gives you that extra torque," Martinez said.

And then there are the fuel savings.

Instead of refueling patrol cars after every 8-hour shift like they used to with the larger cars, Assistant City Manager Kindon Meik said officers report that they only have to refuel the Highlanders a couple of times a week.

While the city hasn't calculated the savings in gas costs, Meik estimated it's probably significant, particularly considering that gas prices have shot up to around the \$4-per-gallon range.

## **Technician takes hybrids high-tech**

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

LINDSAY - One problem with being a trailblazer is having to deal with all the problems and glitches that come with trying something new.

In 2005, after police bought a group of Toyota Highlander hybrids, they discovered that no one had ever tried converting a hybrid to a patrol car before.

So the department was on its own to figure out how to equip them, said police Senior Sgt. Jerry Martinez.

While some things worked out fine from the start, one problem police had to contend with was that the Highlanders have smaller batteries than Ford Crown Victorias and other large sedans that police normally use.

And there were concerns that radios, computers and other electric equipment installed in the Highlanders would drain their batteries.

As it turned out, however, Lindsay police had a solution to the problem in its own ranks: Eliseo Mendez, who in 2006, when 17 Highlanders were being converted for police and fire work, was an evidence technician for the police department.

He also knew his way around cars - most importantly, their electronic systems. In fact, he even ran his own car stereo- and audio-installation business on the side of his evidence-technician job.

The city didn't come to him first to install the electronic equipment, however.

Martinez said his department sent three cars to three different shops to install the equipment at costs ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,700, and the work either took too long - three months at one shop - or the installations weren't done the way he wanted.

In fact, one shop burned out the computer system controlling the brakes for one Highlander.

Mendez was harsher in his criticism of the work.

"... They were done horrible," he said, noting that one Highlander came back with lights that wouldn't work and another came back with holes drilled into its console."

Knowing Mendez's skills at working with cars and their electrical systems, Martinez said he asked him to take a shot at the installations and got the police chief's blessing.

"I knew he would do it right," Martinez said.

## **Up to the challenge**

Being the first to successfully convert a hybrid to a police car was a challenge that excited Mendez, who noted that even Toyota refused to offer technical support.

"There was a lot of talk from outside agencies it couldn't be done - even by Toyota," he said.

Installing the electronic equipment turned out not to be all that tough, said Martinez, who helped Mendez convert the first car over a three-day period. After that, they averaged a couple of conversions a week, he said.

And since they were city employees on the clock, the conversion work ended up costing only about \$600 per Highlander.

Martinez said Mendez even figured out a way that the officers could turn off the cars' automatic daytime-running lights, which was important because "you can't sneak up on somebody [at night] if you have your running lights on."

Mendez said he calculated that if the Highlanders' engines were turned off when the officers were away from them, the cars' radios, overhead lights and computers could still drain the batteries.

"No one needs to be out in a car where only half the time the equipment works," he said

Part of his solution was technical, installing a switch and relay in each Highlander to prevent the electrical equipment from drawing power when the cars are off.

In addition, Lindsay officers were directed not to turn off their cars' engines when responding to calls, so the running motors could generate power to the batteries.

And so far, none of the Highlanders have conked out from battery drains, said Mendez, who now is an officer and drives one of the Highlander hybrids he converted.

"Part of the appeal was to do something nobody had done before," he said of his accomplishment.

In addition, his work is getting considerable attention, as other police agencies around the county interested in using hybrid cars have contacted Lindsay police seeking information on how they converted the Highlanders.

But more important, Mendez said, is that he's helped make these cars reliable for him and his fellow officers.

"Especially in this line of work, everything better work properly."

## **Class action suit filed against steel plant**

By Doug Oakley, Staff Writer

Contra Costa Times, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Seventy nine year-old Rose Evans has lived in West Berkeley for 47 years, but only recently did she figure out that the awful smell in the air might be coming from the steel plant down the street.

"Sometimes it smells so bad you start feeling sick and your eyes start watering," she said. "I didn't know what it was until those people came along and left a flier on my doorstep."

The flier, left by community activists who are fighting Pacific Steel Casting, described the symptoms that she, her late husband, seven children and five grandchildren have experienced over the years: a dry cough, sore throat, itchy skin and a plain old wretched feeling.

Now Evans is the lead plaintiff in a class action suit against the company. She has lived two blocks from the plant on Camelia Street for the past 45 years.

The suit is seeking damages that probably will go "far into the millions," according to Berkeley attorney Timothy Rumberger. It seeks an end to the alleged toxic air emissions the plant puts out. In addition, it offers the company an alternative to fixing the pollution — relocation.

The class action is the fourth pollution-based lawsuit in 18 months the plant has had to answer.

It was sued by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for violating state emissions standards, by a nonprofit group called Communities for a Better Environment for violating the federal Clean Air Act, and by nine neighbors who filed small claims suits.

In all of those suits, the plant has come to court-mandated settlements, and the firm has vowed to cut emissions as a result. The small claims suit, in which neighbors won settlements ranging from \$1,500 to \$5,000, is being appealed.

A spokeswoman for Pacific Steel declined to comment on the current suit.

For its part, the company has invested millions in air filtration devices and even allowed community groups to sift through its scrap metal to weed out potentially dirty pieces that could cause air pollution when they are melted down.

In addition, it pays the city of Berkeley about \$1 million a year in taxes and fees on about \$100 million in yearly sales.

For all that, it continues to foul the air, activists say.

Rumberger said that so far he has more than 100 people who have joined the suit. It is open to anyone who lives downwind of the plant in an area roughly bounded by Second Street, Page Street, Kains Avenue, Marin Avenue and Buchanan Street in both Berkeley and Albany.

"The focus of this suit is on the nuisance caused by the tremendous quantities of emissions that are not being contained on their site," Rumberger said.

Rumberger said that he is submitting evidence of dangerous heavy metals pollution from Pacific Steel from a number of agencies and groups who have done air sampling around the plant in recent years. Those include the California Air Resources Board, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Global Community Monitor and Pacific Steel's own health risk assessment that it was ordered to do by the state of California.

"One of the reasons a class action suit has been delayed is because the science hasn't been there," Rumberger said. "I have to give credit to Global Community Monitor for getting a grant from the air district to do the air testing. Without that science, we didn't have the level of proof to go forward in court, and now we do."

Evans said she was happy to be lead plaintiff in the suit just to get rid of the smell. She has been breathing it for so long now, sometimes she figures she just gets used to it — until she goes somewhere else and breathes some fresh air.

## **New Sierra Club Poll Shows Hispanic Voters Concerned about Global Warming and Energy, Willing to Take Action**

Noticiero Latino/ Sierra Club, San Francisco, CA  
Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Groundbreaking Bendixen & Associates-Conducted Poll is the First-Ever National Survey of Hispanic Voters on Energy and Environmental Issues

Hispanic voters are overwhelmingly concerned about energy, global warming and environmental issues and are willing to take action to find solutions, according to results of a Sierra Club-sponsored national poll released April 23 and conducted by Bendixen & Associates. The first-ever national poll of Hispanics on environmental issues was conducted March 20-30, 2008, and it found that U.S. Hispanics - a growing and politically powerful demographic - are deeply connected to nature and are concerned about the environment enough to take action to protect their communities and their families.

For more information about the survey, please email [Oliver.Bernstein@sierraclub.org](mailto:Oliver.Bernstein@sierraclub.org).

### **Let's go ride a bike**

By Paige Ricks  
CSUF The Collegian, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Campus parking pass, \$68 per semester. Gas, \$3.67 per gallon. Going Green — priceless.

According to bicycle statistics data from the International Bicycle Fund, 10 percent of the U.S. population uses a bicycle or walks as a mode of transportation.

For most Fresno State students, riding their bicycles is not only a quicker way to get around campus, but is also inexpensive and environmentally safe, whether they think about it or not.

And, trying to find a parking space is next to impossible.

The priceless satisfaction of going green applies to the Fresno State students who choose to walk or ride their bicycles to campus.

Her red bike sits on the balcony of her apartment next to her roommate's purple bicycle. Jenna Ruder, a junior kinesiology major, rides her bicycle to class everyday because she lives near campus, just off Barstow Avenue.

Her classes are far away from each other, so she finds it convenient to ride her bicycle to her other classes. Ruder said even if she lived further away from Fresno State she would still make the effort to ride her bicycle.

"Maybe if it was about two to three miles," she said. "But I do it more for the exercise and the gas slump influences me, too."

Ruder said she never really reflected about how she is making a positive impact on the environment.

"I never really thought about it, but I'm sure over time it will have an affect on the environment," Ruder said.

Her roommate, Mallory Breshears, a sophomore pre-psychology major, also rides her bicycle to campus for the same reasons as her roommate.

"My classes are so far apart," she said. "And, it's good exercise."

Breshears sees the advantages to living close to campus, especially now, with gas prices at an all-time high.

"Hell yeah, gas prices influences me to ride my bike, rather than drive my car," she said.

Like Ruder, Breshears does not consider how the environment is affected by her decision to ride her bicycle, but finds parking her bicycle an easier mission than her car.

Senior Ben Musson, a music major, lives off Milbrook, which is two miles further away than Ruder and Breshears.

Musson said he rides his bicycle to campus because of its convenience, the high prices of gas and the lack of available parking.

"It's easier because I can just park my bike two feet away from my class and not have to worry," he said.

Unlike Ruder and Breshears, Musson has thought about how riding his bicycle to campus is affecting the environment.

"My professor last year, who rides his bike to school, always talked about car pollution, so I definitely began to think about it," he said.

Musson does not believe he is doing much, but he thinks about it.

The University Police Department encourages the Fresno State community to be a part of the Red Bike Program, which is a cheaper and healthy way of commuting.

The Red Bike Program allows students, staff and faculty to participate in a program, which offers new and reconditioned bicycles for rental around campus or the city of Fresno.

To rent a new bicycle, there is a \$55 deposit and the first semester is free. Each semester following is a \$5 fee. A U-lock and a helmet are provided. Depending on the contract stipulations, people participating may receive a \$50 refund.

Rental of a reconditioned bike is \$15 with the same conditions. Personal bicycles can also be brought in, licensed by the State of California Department of Motor Vehicles and registered in the University Police Department system.

With this program, students and staff can save \$68, money they would have spent on the expensive price of gas and actually reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish warns that wildfires in Los Angeles worsen air quality. Residents should remain indoors, especially refrain from going outdoors if they smell or see smoke. For more information, call Maricela Velásquez at \(559\) 230-5849.](#)

**Advierten que incendios en Los Ángeles empeoraron el aire  
Los residentes deben permanecer en interiores preferentemente y especialmente evitar salir si huele o se observa humo**

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino, San Diego, CA  
Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Autoridades del sur de California advirtieron que un incendio que tratan de controlar unos mil bomberos empeoró el aire en varios condados, y que los residentes deben tomar medidas preventivas.

De acuerdo con un comunicado de la oficina de Administración Distrital de Calidad del Aire en la región de Los Ángeles, los residentes de los valles de San Gabriel y San Bernardino deben evitar actividades en exteriores.

El comunicado carece de información sobre la cantidad de contaminación por humos y cenizas, pero dice que los residentes deben permanecer en interiores preferentemente y especialmente evitar salir si huele o se observa humo.

[S.F. Chronicle editorial, Tuesday, April 29, 2008](#)

## **The wrong way to save on gas**

It sounds like a miracle. The Bush administration - in a campfire hug with automakers - wants higher gas mileage for cars and trucks.

The package, unveiled last week on Earth Day, came wrapped in ribbons: a 25 percent boost in fuel standards by 2015, a full five years earlier than a somewhat similar package that squeezed through Congress in November. That legislation, the first meaningful change in mileage standards in decades, was itself a milestone.

So why the sudden love-in that improves fuel-economy numbers even more? Maybe it has to do with gas prices, politics and hidden favors - the trifecta of modern energy policy.

The new initiative comes at an opportune moment. Nervous Republicans don't want to be painted as indifferent to gas prices, now touching \$4 a gallon. With November's elections approaching, it's no time to stand pat on a glaring everyday cost that is emptying wallets.

Also, car companies know the sad reality of overfilled dealer parking lots. Thrifty gas-sipping vehicles, popular already, are likely to appeal even more if fuel prices stay in the stratosphere. Automakers have done the math and want a new strategy.

Until now, Detroit has balked at taking up new fuel economy technology partly because the innovations add hefty costs to sticker prices. But the payback period for drivers will be shorter if gas remains expensive, a factor that eased Detroit's fears about investing in high-mileage engines.

Finally, the White House plan came with a hidden surprise. Buried in the back of the 417-page document outlining the changes is a sneak attack on California and 15 other states. These states seek the right to set standards on tailpipe emission to limit greenhouse gases.

In the document, Bush energy officials want to revoke that right, reserving emission rules for Washington's approval. It's an important distinction because the protesting states want a tougher standard, claiming this administration is soft-peddling the effects of global warming gases spewing from the auto and truck tailpipes. Transportation is a major source of such gases.

This final point is a deal-killer in an otherwise praiseworthy plan. California and its allied states, which make up about 40 percent of the U.S. population, want to go to a higher level on greenhouse gases. It's a dispute that has led to two federal court cases, won by the states, and outright rejection by the top Bush appointee in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency. The new fuel-economy proposal is yet another way to stymie the states.

Unless this part of the plan is removed, the overall impact will be flawed. Higher gas mileage, yes, but not with a lock on even more aggressive measures to conserve fuel and limit tailpipe emissions.

The Bush proposal is packaged as a regulatory change that could take effect after a 60-day hearing period. California and its allies should waste no time in protesting the handcuffs on their powers.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Wednesday, April 30, 2008:](#)

### **'Aggressive' means 'go slow' for air district**

Today, the Valley air district board will hear about and vote on a proposed plan for meeting federally mandated air-quality standards for particulate matter, the fine particles that can pass through the filtering mechanisms of the nose and air passages of the human body, reach the lungs and get absorbed through minute blood vessel openings, eventually disrupting cellular processes.

Numerous studies have verified its deadly effects, including lung cancers and cardiac arrests. More recently, a study by Dr. Shakira Franco Suglia of the Harvard School of Public Health reports that children who live in areas affected by soot from heavy traffic score worse on memory and intelligence tests than children breathing cleaner air.

Federal law requires areas to control this type of pollution by 2010. Although reasonable measures exist to clean the air sooner, the local air agency opts for a strategy that projects attainment by 2015, using all five years of the extension allowed by law.

Once again, an air clean-up plan is touted as "aggressive" by the same agency that described last year's ozone plan as "expeditious," despite an 11-year delay, also the maximum allowed by law.

*Alvin Valeriano, Fresno*