

## Forest Service explains its 'let it burn' policy

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee and Modesto Bee, Friday, July 18, 2008

If every cloud has a silver lining, what good can be said of the big brown dome of wildfire smoke that capped much of California these past few weeks?

Plenty, say ecologists who study the effects of fire on the landscape.

While the siege of lightning-sparked fires continues to inundate parts of Northern California with hazardously smoky air, the blazes also consumed more than 1,400 square miles of dangerously overgrown forests and oak woodlands – the size of nearly three Lake Tahoe basins – leaving that much less fuel for future, more catastrophic and expensive fires.

Federal land managers in California are retooling their firefighting strategies to capture more of the public safety, economic and environmental benefits of letting wildfires run their natural course without overwhelming the public with smoke and destroying homes.

That's a tough balancing act in the nation's most populous state, which already endures the smoggiest and grittiest air in the country. But in a select few remote national forests, parks and wilderness areas, ecologists say, the federal government has been weaning itself off Smokey Bear's admonitions with measurable success.

"We didn't have any injuries. We didn't burn any houses, and we cleared out 15,000 acres of dense vegetation that hasn't seen fire in decades and, in some places, a century – and that's a good thing," said Brent Skaggs, a U.S. Forest Service fire management officer who let nature take its course under close watch – and tricky weather – in the Clover fire that was recently contained in the Sequoia and Inyo national forests.

Federal officials call it "reintroducing fire" to the landscape. Historically, wildfire smoke filled the Central Valley and draped the mountains flanking much of the summer and fall. Extinguishing the fires became a federal mandate with the creation of the Forest Service at the turn of the 20th century.

The firefighting made it safer to extend development into the woods, but also made for more dangerous forests with the buildup of deadwood that would have otherwise gone up in smoke. As a result, modern blazes recur more frequently. And they often do more damage than good to the flora and fauna – humans included.

Backing off from total fire suppression and letting fire run more of its natural course effectively inoculates the forest from more virulent fires that denude large swaths of the landscape, which in turn invites mudslides.

"We could have suppressed it and had the thing out earlier, Skaggs said of the Clover fire, which was discovered May 31. "But by doing that we would be just prolonging the inevitable. We had an opportunity to manage fire or have it manage us."

The practice, of course, could backfire. A sudden shift in wind direction or unexpected gusts in the unnaturally dense forests could turn such experiments into disasters – plastering communities with smoke or, worse, burning them down.

Fire managers have reduced the chances of a hands-off fire running awry by limiting the practice to the remote backcountry of the central Sierra and the desolate northern corners of the state.

Namely: Portions of the Mendocino, Klamath and Shasta-Trinity national forests that encompassed large wilderness areas; Lassen National Park and the neighboring Lava Beds National Monument and Modoc National Forest; and Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon national parks and surrounding Stanislaus and Sequoia national forests. Managers of these forests have plans in place for using the let-it-burn approach, known in firefighting parlance as "wildfire use" or "appropriate management response."

Even then, the practice cannot be used without a series of approvals up the Forest Service line of command, from the ranger on the ground to the brass at headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Beyond that, forest officials in many cases need the permission of local air pollution control districts.

The Forest Service had a tough time getting the cooperation of pollution regulators when it began "wildfire use" about five years ago, said Trent Procter, air quality program manager for the agency's Pacific Southwest region, which includes California.

Working against the agency were earlier "prescribed burns" – deliberately set to thin out fire-prone thickets – that went awry at Lake Tahoe and the Stanislaus forest.

Relations have since improved. "They realize that in the absence of (natural burns), we'll end up with more catastrophic wildfires like those we have now, where the smoke will be worse, Procter said.

For its part, the Forest Service recently added at least a dozen portable air pollution samplers to the state Air Resources Board's network for monitoring the smoke levels, which reached the hazardous level Thursday in the Trinity County seat of Weaverville, said Jeff Cook, an emergency response coordinator with the air board.

Starting today, the federal agency will be providing "smoke forecasts" enabling the air board to give the public more advance warning of unhealthful conditions.

#### IN THE KNOW

Fires are important to the health of a forest ecosystem. Therefore, forest managers sometimes allow lightning-set fires to burn under close watch. Ecologists say the practice has several benefits:

- Allows new growth that provides food and habitat for animals
- Removes hazardous deadwood and other debris
- Reduces the threat of catastrophic fires
- Helps manage and diversify landscapes
- Opens overgrown areas to the sun
- Restores natural woodlands
- Returns valuable nutrients to the soil

Sources: National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service

### **Poll shows car-loving Californians cutting gas use**

In the S.F. Chronicle, Friday, July 18, 2008

Sacramento, CA (AP) --A new poll shows two-thirds of Californians are cutting their gasoline use and reducing other spending because of soaring fuel prices.

The Field Poll also shows that majorities support building more nuclear power plants and liquid natural gas facilities in California.

Even so, a majority opposes more oil drilling offshore or on public land. And 70 percent oppose lowering air pollution standards as a way to squeeze out slightly higher gas mileage.

The poll found that 78 percent of survey respondents were driving less, 59 percent were using a family's most fuel-efficient vehicle and 28 percent said they are carpooling more.

Just 17 percent say they have switched to public transit and 27 percent said they had replaced a car or truck with a more fuel-efficient vehicle.

Thursday's Field Poll of 809 registered voters was conducted July 8-14. The telephone survey has a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points.

### **Assembly OKs port container bill**

**Republicans fear the measure could drive business to Seattle**

Capital Press, Friday, July 18, 2008

SACRAMENTO - California could earn an estimated \$400 million or more annually under a bill passed by the state Assembly that would impose a fee on containers moving through the ports of Long Beach, Los Angeles and Oakland.

The funds would be used in Southern California and the San Francisco Bay area on various projects that reduce air pollution and traffic congestion generated by the ports. Combined, the ports handle more than 40 percent of the nation's cargo.

The Assembly voted 45-24 Tuesday, July 15, to pass the bill. If the Senate reconvenes during its recess because of budgeting, it is expected to concur on the bill and pass it to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

If the Senate does not reconvene during recess, the bill is expected to reach him on Aug. 4. Similar measures were vetoed or failed in the past two years.

This year's version, sponsored by Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, would impose a \$60 fee on every typical-sized cargo container leaving or entering the ports. He said the amended bill addresses concerns that led to Schwarzenegger's veto in 2006 and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa withholding his support last year.

"We have built a statewide coalition to support the container fee," Lowenthal said.

Assemblywoman Betty Karnette, D-Long Beach, said people in her district are dying from pollution.

"Who is profiting? I don't think it's our workers profiting from all these imports," she said. "Other countries are profiting at our expense."

Republicans said the measure would increase prices of goods and could drive business elsewhere, like Seattle's port.

"We can't be competitive, folks," said Assemblyman Rick Keene, R-Chico, "if we continue to tax the economic engine of the state."

Steven Ly of the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce says the bill is unnecessary because the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles already have pollution measures in place.

"It's not just bad for business," Ly said. "It's redundant. ... We've heard the governor has indicated he's willing to sign the bill, which worries us deeply."

## **Regional Roundup**

### **Smoke gone for now**

By News-Sentinel Staff

Lodi News Sentinel, Saturday, July 19, 2008

Blue skies have been seen for a few days now, and according to Accuweather, a private forecasting firm, they are here to stay.

Ken Clark, meteorologist for Accuweather said the fires have died down enough for lingering smoke to make it's way North.

In addition, Clark said the lack of Northern winds helps keep smoky skies at bay as well.

So, unless more fires flare up, Clark said we shouldn't have any air quality issues with the exception of an occasional haze.

### **Herald residents worried about gravel mining proposal**

By Ross Farrow -- News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi News Sentinel, Saturday, July 19, 2008

Sacramento's most prominent housing developer has been waiting almost eight years to mine 330 acres of topsoil and gravel, but ranchers in the Herald area have continually objected to the project because it would destroy the area's peace and quiet.

Angelo Tsakopoulos is waiting for a traffic study to be completed to go with the draft environmental impact report that has already been prepared.

Tsakopoulos' application for a conditional use permit calls for 191 trucks a day to travel along Herald roads to and from the plant for 25 to 30 years.

"Hundreds of trucks will be going up and down our substandard roads, where we have children waiting for school buses," Herald resident Jean Hess said.

Herald also has horseback riders who use the roads. They would be affected by gravel trucks traveling to and from the plant, Hess said.

Many of the trucks are likely to take Twin Cities Road east of Highway 99. That prompted the city of Galt to send a letter to Sacramento County, stating its concern over the freeway interchange being inadequate for the truck volume the project would create along with student safety issues at the Twin Cities-Marengo Road intersection, Galt City Councilman Darryl Clare said.

Estrellita Continuation High School and the future Liberty Ranch High School are on Marengo Road, a block from Twin Cities Road.

Calls this week to representatives for Tsakopoulos were not returned.

Herald residents also maintain that mining the Borden Junction area would reduce the groundwater table, and the trucks would pollute the air.

"It's a tremendous burden they're asking us to swallow," said project opponent Al Dupre, who lives on Borden Road. "It's a major, major thing."

Tina Holt, who sits on the board of the Herald Area Civic Association, also known as Stop the Rock, said the project would reduce the water table by eight inches per year without any additional population.

Herald isn't the only rural community with concerns about rock quarries in their neighborhood.

neighborhood southeast of Lockeford and south of Clements has had issues with KRC Aggregate, which expanded its plant in about 2000. The plant is northeast of Brandt and Clements roads.

After the expansion, there were suddenly a lot more trucks coming in and out of the KRC plant.

"Trucks were running people off the road," said Brandt Road resident Ed Steffani.

Since that time, KRC agreed to remain off Brandt Road, which is narrow and hilly in that area.

Meanwhile in Herald, residents say their latest setback is the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors' approval of zoning code amendments for surface mining applications countywide by a 4-1 vote, with Supervisor Don Nottoli of Galt opposing.

"The amendments have lots of regulations or guidelines that make it a better interface between mining and residential area," county Senior Planner Michael Winter said.

The amendments don't specify Borden Junction, but Herald residents believe the action is pointed directly at them and the Tsakopoulos project.

They've paved a very slippery way of letting it occur," Holt said.

The Board of Supervisors, in essence, said "We're going to put your life in the toilet, and we don't care," Holt added.

While the Borden Ranch project could be approved with a conditional use permit, the Board of Supervisors has the ability to deny it if the board determines that it would be potentially detrimental to schools, residences, offices, churches, day-care centers, parks or golf courses, according to the amendments approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 11.

"We're having to remain vigilant," Holt said.

Tsakopoulos purchased the 8,400-acre ranch in property in 1993. Four years later, he was fined \$500,000 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and required to restore four acres of wetlands after filling

wetlands without a permit, according to documents from the United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit.

Tsakopoulos then sued the Corps and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, claiming that the Corps overstepped its bounds. He lost the case. In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court deadlocked 4-4, so the circuit court's decision stood.

The Herald Area Civic Association board meets at 7 p.m. the fourth Thursday of each month at Blue Gum Winery, 13637 Borden Road. For more information on the organization, call 217-4768, send an e-mail to [HACA95638@aol.com](mailto:HACA95638@aol.com) or visit [www.heraldcivic.org](http://www.heraldcivic.org).

### **Borden Ranch mining project at a glance**

Applicant: Sacramento developer Angelo Tsakopoulos, also known as Borden Ranch Partnership.

Location: Eastern end of Borden Road, 9.3 miles east of Galt, 5 miles south of Rancho Seco and across Dry Creek from Mackville Road in Clements.

Size: 330 acres.

Length of project: 25 to 30 years.

Estimated yield: 6 million cubic yards of topsoil, 3 million cubic yards of aggregate.

*Source: Sacramento County Planning and Community Development Department*

### **Bus ridership spikes as gas prices continue to soar**

#### **Merced County Transit System has had 10 percent boost**

By CORINNE REILLY

Merced Sun-Star, Monday, July 21, 2008

As gas prices have skyrocketed in recent months, so has local bus ridership.

Both the Merced County Transit System and the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System announced record ridership increases last week.

"I think people are really feeling the pinch," said YARTS transit manager Dick Whittington. "It's good to know they're turning to public transportation."

Ridership across the Merced County Transit System increased nearly 10 percent in the last fiscal year, county officials said. In all, the system handled an additional 100,000 pickups over last year.

Between April and July, ridership jumped 17 percent compared with the same period last year.

Besides rising gas prices, improvements to the county's bus system in recent years is probably contributing to the spike in riders, said Larnold Jones, the county's assistant transportation manager.

"I think that once people get on and try the bus, they realize that it's become an easy, reliable way to get around," Jones said. "So they keep riding."

YARTS, which shuttles passengers between Merced, Mariposa and Yosemite National Park, served more riders in the last fiscal year, which ended June 30, than any in its eight-year history, Whittington said.

He said that record is especially astounding because YARTS has been forced in recent years to scale back its services and the size of its buses as a result of the Ferguson Rockslide.

The rockslide first closed Highway 140 -- the only direct route between Merced and Yosemite -- in 2006. It continues to hamper traffic today.

"To be able to pull off a record given those circumstances -- it's really exciting," Whittington said.

YARTS served 61,800 riders this year, he said, adding that it expects to top that number this year.

For more information on the county's bus system, fares and routes, go to [www.mercedthebus.com](http://www.mercedthebus.com) or call (800) 345-3111.

For more information on YARTS, go to [www.yarts.com](http://www.yarts.com) or call (877) 989-2787.

## **Air quality unhealthy for sensitive groups**

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Monday, July 21, 2008

Today's air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups (124), according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Sunny skies are expected today with a high temperature of 94 degrees, according to the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Hanford. Calm winds becoming northwesterly from 8 to 11 mph.

Tonight expect mostly clear skies with a low temperature of 63 degrees. Northwesterly winds from 5 to 8 mph.

High temperatures will climb this week to a predicted high of 102 degrees on Friday.

## **Olympic city cuts traffic to clean up the air**

By Audra Ang, Associated Press

In the S.F. Chronicle, Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee, USA Today and other papers, Monday, July 21, 2008

Half of Beijing's drivers left their cars at home Monday and took public transportation instead on the first workday under new restrictions meant to clear this city's notoriously polluted skies before next month's Olympics.

Under a two-month plan that started Sunday, half of the capital's 3.3 million cars will be removed from city streets on alternate days, depending on whether the license plate ends in an odd or even number.

Those caught driving on days they shouldn't be fined \$14, a pricey penalty even for China's capital. It wasn't known how many tickets had been issued; phones rang unanswered all day at the Beijing police traffic management bureau.

Drivers with even-numbered plates were forced Monday to take public transportation, and the government estimated that that would mean an extra 4 million commuters.

To meet the demand, the city was trying to shorten the time between subway trains from three minutes to two. But that triggered some glitches Monday as officials tried out a new signal system, the official Xinhua News Agency said on its Web site.

Some stops were forced to close for a few minutes as trains arrived late and the number of passengers waiting on platforms swelled.

The Jianguomen stop -- a major interchange for Line 1, which circles the heart of the city, and the east-west Line 2 -- shut down for about 20 minutes because it was too crowded, said a woman who answered the telephone at the subway information hot line.

"There are many more people on the subway at this hour compared with before," said Wang Kai as he stepped off an afternoon train. "However I support the restrictions because it means the air quality will improve."

Still, in some areas, crowds remained surprisingly manageable, perhaps because employers have been asked to stagger work schedules, and public institutions opened an hour later than normal.

"It seems that the subway isn't as busy as I expected. There are fans and air conditioning, so you don't feel very hot," said Chen Songde, who normally drives to work in Beijing.

Traffic still snaked along main thoroughfares and highways Monday, but it moved at a steady pace.

"Before we would be at a dead standstill," said a taxi driver who would give only his surname, Zhang, as he steered around cars. "Now it's better."

It could be several days before the impact of the cleanup plan, which also includes cutbacks on construction and factory closures, is noticeable. The government has not made public a specific target for

vehicle emission levels, one of the city's biggest sources of pollution, or said how it will measure air quality.

Experts say the plan could still go wrong because unpredictable winds could blow pollution into Beijing from other provinces or the lack of wind -- common in August -- could enable local pollution to build up.

However, Sun Weide, spokesman for the Beijing Olympics organizing committee, was optimistic.

"It can be easily felt that traffic is less heavy now and the number of vehicles on the road is clearly smaller," Sun said. "The weather has been good since yesterday."

Changes in air quality will be monitored by experts from the city's environment protection bureau, which has 27 survey stations around Beijing and another 18 in Olympic venues, the state-run Beijing Times newspaper reported.

So far, "the air in the city is good, the density of pollutants has fallen," the report said, citing the bureau.

But it will take at least 20 days for results to be conclusive, Du Shaozhong, its deputy director was cited as saying.

Employers have also been asked to stagger work schedules and public institutions opened an hour later than normal to help ease gridlock.

Two new subway lines and an airport rail link were opened over the weekend, with the projected number of passengers on the three routes expected to reach 1.1 million daily during the Olympics.

In all, eight lines will transport up to 5 million people daily during the Olympics, the company that runs the Beijing subway said Monday.

Besides the traffic plan, chemical plants, power stations and foundries had to cut emissions by 30 percent beginning Sunday. Dusty, noisy construction in the capital was to stop entirely.

On many days, Beijing's skyline can barely be seen because of a thick, gray-brown haze that hangs over the city.

Already, many competitors in the Aug. 8-24 games are choosing to train away from Beijing, and International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge has said that outdoor endurance events lasting more than an hour will be postponed if air quality is poor.

The world's greatest distance runner, Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia, has bowed out of the marathon event because the city's pollution irritates his breathing.

Some 300,000 heavily polluting vehicles -- aging industrial trucks, many of which operate only at night -- were banned beginning July 1.

The government has also improved public transportation options for the estimated 4 million extra people who will be off the roads because of the traffic plan, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The city plans to add up to 3,000 more buses by the time the games start, raising the daily capacity for passengers from 12.5 million to 15 million, Xinhua said.

## **Beijing begins massive Olympic shutdown**

By STEPHEN WADE

Washington Post, Saturday, July 19, 2008

BEIJING -- Beijing's Olympic shutdown begins Sunday, a drastic plan to lift the Chinese capital's gray shroud of pollution just three weeks ahead of the games.

Half of Beijing's 3.3 million vehicles will be pulled off the roads and many polluting factories will be shuttered. Chemical plants, power stations and foundries left open have to cut emissions by 30 percent -- and dust-spewing construction in the capital will be halted.

In a highly stage-managed Olympics aimed at showing off the rising power of the 21st century, no challenge is greater than producing crystalline air for 10,500 of the world's greatest athletes.

"Pea-soup air at the opening ceremony would be their worst nightmare," said Victor Cha, director of Asian Studies at Georgetown University.

Striking venues and \$40 billion spent to improve infrastructure cannot mask Beijing's dirty air. A World Bank study found China is home to 16 of the 20 worst cities for air quality. Three-quarters of the water flowing through urban areas is unsuitable for drinking or fishing.

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge has repeatedly warned that outdoor endurance events lasting more than an hour will be postponed if the air quality is poor.

Under the two-month plan, vehicles will be allowed on the roads every other day depending on even-odd registration numbers. In addition, 300,000 heavy polluting vehicles -- aging industrial trucks, many of which operate only at night -- were banned beginning July 1.

Five days after Sunday's traffic ban goes into effect, special Olympic traffic lanes will begin operating until Sept. 25, a plan that has been used in previous games. Beijing is setting aside 165 miles of roadway on which certified Olympic vehicles will be allowed to move from hotels, Olympic venues and Athletes Village.

To further ease congestion, employers are being asked to stagger work schedules. Public institutions will open an hour later than normal and two new subway lines scheduled to open Sunday should also bring relief.

The plan to clean the gray air seems to match the high-security tone of the games, which will be policed by 100,000 officials.

Razor-wire barriers and soldiers standing at attention guard the outskirts of the Olympic Green area and the Chinese have even installed ground-to-air missiles near one Olympic venue to protect it from possible attacks.

Security, tight visa rules and inflated hotel prices seem to be keeping foreigners away. Many nightspots near Olympic venue are being closed by security officials, who say the games are under threat from Muslim extremists in China's western Xinjiang region.

Beijing organizers are also in a protracted showdown with TV broadcasters, who are seeking free movement and reporting during the games. China's communist government seems to fear being embarrassed during the games by pro-Tibet activists, local dissidents or critics of China's human rights policies.

The gigantic experiment to curb pollution could still go wrong.

Veerabhadran Ramanathan, an atmospheric scientist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, said unpredictable winds could blow pollution into Beijing despite factory shutdowns in the city and five surrounding provinces.

Ramanathan is leading a multinational research project in tracking Beijing's pollution before, during and after the Olympics.

"Reducing the local emissions is going to reduce the local pollution, but is that sufficient to help the athletes breath cleaner air? This is going to depend on the winds," he said.

## **Obama shifts stance on environmental issues**

By Ken Dilanian

USA TODAY, Monday, July 21, 2008

WASHINGTON - In May 1998, at the urging of the state's coal industry, the Illinois Legislature passed a bill condemning the Kyoto global warming treaty and forbidding state efforts to regulate greenhouse gases.

Barack Obama voted "aye."

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee now calls climate change "one of the greatest moral challenges of our generation," and proposes cutting carbon emissions 80% by 2050. But as a state

senator, from 1997 to 2004, he usually supported bills sought by coal interests, according to legislative records and interviews.

Obama is not the only politician whose public stance has shifted on global warming, which a scientific consensus says has been caused chiefly by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Presumptive Republican nominee John McCain, who now backs limits on carbon emissions, was among 95 U.S. senators who voted in 1997 to oppose the Kyoto Protocol, an emissions reduction scheme that had been negotiated by then-vice president Al Gore.

Still, Obama, who touts his independence from special interests, made a point of embracing the coal industry as part of his quest for statewide office. When he ran for U.S. Senate in 2004, he was flanked by mine workers to proclaim that "there's always going to be a role for coal" in Illinois.

"He understands how important coal is to the state of Illinois and to the Midwest," said Illinois state Rep. Dan Reitz, a Democrat and former coal miner who sponsored the anti-Kyoto language and campaigned for Obama during the West Virginia primary.

Employees of coal companies and electric utilities have contributed \$539,597 to Obama's U.S. Senate and presidential campaign, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. McCain, whose energy plan calls for taxpayers to invest \$2 billion in "clean coal" research that includes technology to capture carbon emissions, has received \$402,365 from coal and utility interests during the same period, since 2004 to the current campaign, according to the center.

#### Straddling two worlds

The Obama campaign did not respond to questions about his support for the coal industry, except to address his 1998 Kyoto vote. The campaign said in a statement that the Kyoto treaty did not have "meaningful and achievable emissions targets," and that Obama "did not believe that state agencies in Illinois should unilaterally take steps to implement a global policy on their own ..."

The statement said Obama supports investing in technology to [reduce carbon dioxide emissions](#) from coal burning.

Meg Boyle, global warming policy specialist for Greenpeace, called those technologies risky and expensive. She said they can't "deliver in time to avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change."

"He's definitely trying to straddle two politically irreconcilable objectives: taking decisive action against global warming while keeping a healthy coal industry," said Frank O'Donnell, president of the non-partisan Clean Air Watch. "Obama's record certainly suggests that environmentalists aren't going to be calling the shots in his administration without input from industry."

Obama's other votes on coal in the state Senate included:

- In 1997, he voted to divert sales taxes to a fund for grants to help reopening closed coal mines and "incentives to attract new businesses that use coal."
- In 2001, Obama voted for legislation that offered \$3.5 billion in loan guarantees to build coal-fired power plants with no ability to control carbon emissions.
- In 2003, he voted to allow \$300 million in taxpayer-backed bonds to build or expand coal-fired power plants.

"You know, I am a strong supporter, I think, of downstate coal interests and our need to prop up and improve the outputs downstate," Obama said on the Senate floor before voting on the 2001 bill.

#### A mixed reaction

Obama's overall environmental record was exemplary, said Gene Karpinski, president of the Washington, D.C.-based League of Conservation Voters, which spent \$400,000 to help Obama in the 2004 U.S. Senate primary.

In one of his first acts in the U.S. Senate, Obama bucked his state's energy industry and voted to kill a Bush administration air-pollution proposal opposed by environmentalists. "When forced to choose between

the coal industry and the broader public interest, he chose clean air," said Jack Darin, head of the Illinois chapter of the Sierra Club.

Environmentalists were less pleased, though, when Obama voted for a 2005 energy bill opposed by McCain and most Democrats. Obama said he liked the bill's support for renewable energy. The bill contained \$9 billion in coal subsidies, according to Public Citizen, a consumer watchdog group. The Natural Resources Defense Council said the bill "significantly weakens environmental protections."

Obama also drew criticism for sponsoring a bill in January 2007 to devote \$8 billion in subsidies to a technology to convert coal to liquid fuel. The Sierra Club says liquid coal "releases almost double the global warming emissions per gallon as regular gasoline."

As the presidential campaign was well underway in June 2007, the Obama campaign issued a clarification: He would not support liquid coal processes unless they emit a fifth less carbon than conventional fuels.

"When you're running for president and you've got environmentalists biting your head off every day, that's to be expected," said Phil Gonet, head of the Illinois Coal Association. "We're still optimistic that he may be helpful at some point in the future."

## **Airline crisis boosts biofuel drive**

By Sarah Marsh, Reuters

USA TODAY, Monday, July 21, 2008

FARNBOROUGH, England - Algae and nuts are among the alternative sources of fuel being considered by an increasingly skittish aviation industry as an alternative to petroleum, whose price rises threaten airlines with bankruptcy.

With oil prices possibly poised to break through the \$150 a barrel barrier, biofuels based on sources of energy like these no longer seem far-fetched - but they will take years to develop and no-one will be flying in a farm-fueled jet any time soon.

Discussion about potential alternatives to help airlines cope with high fuel prices and meet environmental requirements buzzed round the chalets at the Farnborough air show this week, as aerospace firms vied to show off their green credentials.

Environmentalists, however, said it was empty talk.

"At \$70 a barrel, people were saying 'it is never going to happen'. At \$150 a barrel, it starts to look interesting," said Ric Parker, Rolls-Royce's research and technology head.

The British engine maker said this week it was starting a scientific test program with British Airways to investigate alternative aviation fuels.

"There is some realization that the industry needs to be proactive ... and if they aren't then we'll be forced by governments to be proactive," said Paul Adams, senior vice president of engineering at U.S. rival Pratt & Whitney.

European Union lawmakers recently approved a deal to include aviation, which they say generates 3% of carbon dioxide emissions, from 2012 in the EU's Emission Trading Scheme. The airline industry has criticized the move as a costly burden.

"(For) the people who figure out how to make (alternative fuels) work, it will be a very profitable thing for them in the long term," Adams said.

Grand schemes for alternative fuels have been in incubation for years, with research progressing slowly as the aviation industry requires a fuel with greater specifications than the rest of the transport sector - including low freezing points.

But high oil prices and concerns over pollution have forced the industry to step up their efforts towards finding a sustainable and economically viable alternative to oil-based kerosene, which has doubled in price over the past year.

Another factor driving research is the strategic desire for fuel independence, especially in the United States.

The U.S. Air Force aims to have at least a 50/50 blend of jet fuel and synthetic fuel on all aircraft by 2017, spokesman Gary Strasburg said in an emailed statement.

So far synthetic fuels based on non-renewable sources such as gas and coal have the edge over plant-based biofuels.

European planemaker Airbus this year flew one of its A380 superjumbos using synthetic fuel from natural gas, known as gas-to-liquid, which is almost free of sulfur, can be used with current engines and could be available soon.

Food competition

Biofuels, currently mainly produced from crops such as grain, vegetable oils and sugar, are seen by advocates as a better alternative fuel since they could cut emissions of greenhouse gases and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Nuts from Amazon rainforests helped fuel the world's first commercial airline flight partly powered by renewable energy earlier this year.

Critics say an expansion in the area of crops grown for energy has helped drive up food prices, and some scientists have questioned the environmental benefits of so-called first-generation biofuels.

"The real environmental improvement will come with bio-to-liquid, but the difficulty is not to compete with the food chain," said Axel Krein, Airbus' senior vice president for research and technology.

Using algae is an option because it would not compete with human food needs, contains a lot of energy and uses less area than crops, he said. Still, "significant and meaningful" quantities of biofuels would not be available before 2015-2020.

Airbus chief Tom Enders said it would take time to replace kerosene, adding that a 30% cut by 2030 was possible.

Environmental group Greenpeace is skeptical. "Alternative fuels are a pipe dream", campaigner Anna Jones said.

"The idea that alternative fuels will solve climate change sometime in the distant future is just a distraction when we need to start slashing our emissions now," Jones added.

Improved engine design could deliver greater savings and contribute more to reducing carbon emissions than alternative fuels, Charles Alcock, of Aviation International News, said.

[Planemakers say they have reduced aircraft fuel burn and carbon dioxide emissions by 70%](#) and noise by 75% since the early 1970s, mainly through new technology.

*Additional reporting by James Regan.*

## **Cosmic Markdown: EPA Says Life Is Worth Less**

By David A. Fahrenthold

Washington Post, Saturday, July 19, 2008

Someplace else, people might tell you that human life is priceless. In Washington, the federal government has appraised it like a '96 Camaro with bad brakes.

Last week, it was revealed that an Environmental Protection Agency office had lowered its official estimate of life's value, from about \$8.04 million to about \$7.22 million. That decision has put a spotlight on the concept of the "Value of a Statistical Life," in which the Washington bureaucracy takes on a question usually left to preachers and poets.

This value is routinely calculated by several agencies, each putting its own dollar figure on the worth of life -- not any particular person's life, just that of a *generic* American. The figure is then used to judge whether potentially lifesaving policy measures are really worth the cost.

A human life, based on an economic analysis grounded in observations of everyday Americans, typically turns out to be worth \$5 million to \$8 million -- about as much as a mega-mansion or a middle infielder.

Now, for the first time, the EPA has used this little-known process to devalue life, something that environmentalists say could set a scary precedent, making it seem that lifesaving pollution reductions are not worth the cost.

"By reducing the value of human life, which is really a devious way of cooking the books, the perceived benefits of cleaning up the air seem less," said Frank O'Donnell of the District-based group Clean Air Watch. "That has the effect of weakening the case for pollution cleanup."

To grasp the mind-bending concept of a Blue Book value on life, government officials say it is important to remember that they are not thinking about anyone specific. That happens in lawsuits, when plaintiffs seek to be compensated for a life lost -- and there, it can involve personal factors such as the deceased's lost income.

Here, officials say, they are trying instead to come up with the value of a typical life, without any personal information attached.

They might know, for instance, that a new cut in air pollution will save 50 lives a year -- though they don't know who those people might be. Still they want to decide whether saving them is worth the cost, officials say, and it helps to assign a dollar value to each life saved.

An example of this kind of analysis was used by the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission this year:

A proposal to make mattresses less flammable was expected to cost the industry \$343 million to implement. But, a spokeswoman said, the move was also expected to save 270 people. The commission calculated that each life was worth \$5 million, which meant a benefit of about \$1.3 billion.

That was greater than the expense, she said, so the move made sense.

"It is, sometimes, a weird idea" to weigh lives against other costs, acknowledged Jack Wells, chief economist for the U.S. Department of Transportation. "But, if you think about it, people behave that way all the time. . . . We could eliminate a lot of the [highway] fatalities by imposing a 10-mile-per-hour speed limit." But, he said, society implicitly tolerates greater highway deaths in return for the economic benefits of faster travel.

But how do you put a dollar value on a life, even in a generic sense?

It wouldn't work for researchers to survey Americans at gunpoint and ask how much they would pay not to die. Instead, an unlikely academic field has grown up to extrapolate life's value from the everyday decisions of average Americans.

Researchers try to figure out how much money it takes for people to accept slightly bigger risks, such as a more dangerous job. They also look at how much people will pay to make their daily risks smaller -- such as buying a bike helmet or a safer car.

"How much are you willing to pay for a small reduction . . . in the probability that you will die?" asked Joe Aldy, a fellow at the D.C.-based think tank Resources for the Future.

The rest is more or less multiplication: If someone will accept a 1-in-10,000 chance of death for \$500, then the value of life must be 10,000 times \$500, or \$5 million.

But it is one thing to calculate the numbers and another to explain them to the public. The EPA has been fighting that battle since last week, when the Associated Press revealed that the agency's air office had reduced its Value of a Statistical Life.

Al McGartland, the director of the agency's National Center for Environmental Economics, said the air office had revised the old figure in 2004 after new academic research showed it was skewed too high.

"It's based on better methods," McGartland said of the air office's assessment. He said the new number would increase over time, in part because of inflation.

The EPA's value for life remains one of the highest. Earlier this year, the Department of Transportation raised its value -- but even after the increase, it stood at \$5.8 million, more than a million dollars less than the EPA's.

Still, environmental activists said the decision made it more likely that the EPA's regulations would allow greater air pollution, because deaths triggered by the pollution would seem to count for less. Experts say serious air pollution can make heart and lung conditions worse, sometimes resulting in death.

One of the researchers whom the EPA cited said he was puzzled at the agency's calculations on the value of a human life.

"Nobody's ever lowered it," said W. Kip Viscusi of Vanderbilt University. EPA came closest: In 2003, it tried to count senior citizens' lives as worth less than those of other adults. After a loud outcry from seniors, the agency backed off.

Viscusi said most researchers believe the value should generally be going up, as Americans have become wealthier and more willing to spend money to avoid risks.

"I personally wasn't in favor of lowering the value of life, let's put it that way," he said.

*Lowering the value of life.* In some bureaucratic corners of Washington, it is the kind of phrase that nobody blinks at anymore.

But it still can sound odd to those accustomed to thinking of life's worth in other ways.

Daniel Zemel, rabbi at Temple Micah on Wisconsin Avenue NW, said Wednesday that the idea of a dollar value on life brings to mind the teaching that "you put one human life on the scale, and you put the rest of the world on the scale, the scale is balanced equally."

Zemel said he could understand officials' logic for making decisions this way. But he said he would counsel anybody whose job involved "Statistical Lives" to think about what they really represent.

"Numbers on a piece of paper are, at the end of the day, somewhere out there," Zemel said, "real people whose lives are being impacted."

*Staff researcher Meg Smith contributed to this report.*

## **Tokyo's Cantankerous Boss Takes On Global Warming**

By Blaine Harden

Washington Post, Friday, July 18, 2008

TOKYO -- In a long, fabulous and cranky life, Shintaro Ishihara, the three-term governor of Tokyo, has specialized in the art of giving offense.

The 75-year-old novelist, yachtsman, North Pole adventurer, theatrical director, nationalist fulminator and big-city boss has exuberantly offended women, immigrants, animal lovers, Africans and the French, as well as countless Asians whose nations were brutalized by Japan before and during World War II.

He is not done yet.

Thanks to global climate change and the Bush administration's refusal to join in the U.N. accord that is attempting to deal with it, Ishihara is just getting warmed up.

"America is the most selfish country," he said during an interview in an austere meeting room in the 48-story building from which he runs Japan's largest city. "From the way they talk, Americans believe even if the world disappears, America wouldn't disappear."

Ishihara described the leaders of the Group of Eight industrial nations, who gathered this month in Japan for a summit, as co-conspirators in "a big racket." They dispensed "nonsense," he said, when they agreed to try to halve greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050, but declined to make their target mandatory.

In any case, Ishihara thinks it is too late to avoid the catastrophic consequences of climate change.

"I personally believe we are not going to make it in time," he said.

That does not mean that Ishihara -- whose city of nearly 13 million people will be half-swallowed by the rising sea by 2050, if worst-case predictions come true -- intends to stand by quietly and let Tokyo slip into a warm, wet grave.

He has bullied the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly into setting binding limits on greenhouse-gas emissions in his city, which is home to one in 10 Japanese.

He readily concedes these limits will not significantly alter the momentum of climate change, worldwide or in Japan, which is the world's fifth-largest emitter. Tokyo, for all its people, accounts for only 5 percent of Japan's emissions.

"You can only do what you can," he said. "Somebody has got to do it."

That reminds Ishihara of what the Protestant theologian Martin Luther had to say about the spiritual value of a hopeless gesture: "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

Ishihara's apple tree is a mandatory cap-and-trade system that commits Tokyo to reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 25 percent below 2000 levels by 2020. The plan will assign 1,300 office towers and factories a maximum annual tonnage of emissions. If they emit less than allowed, they can sell their allowances to others that exceed the limit.

Thanks to Ishihara's willfulness on climate change, Tokyo is far ahead of the rest of Japan in the numerical specificity of its reduction goals and in the power of its laws to enforce them.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has said his government plans to test a voluntary carbon-trading system later this year, and he estimates Japan can cut emissions by 14 percent by 2020.

The Tokyo system goes into effect next year. When it does, Ishihara boasts, his will be the only city in Asia to be part of the International Carbon Action Partnership, which includes the European Union and several U.S. states, including California, New York and Maryland.

Fines for companies that violate the emissions law will be relatively small, but Ishihara said the public-relations price will be big and heavily weighted with shame. "We will be releasing names of companies that are fined," he said.

Climate change is now a vote-swaying issue in Tokyo and across Japan, where a populist ethic of energy conservation has taken firm hold. Energy consumption per person here is about half that in the United States, and the growth of greenhouse-gas emissions is slower than anywhere in the industrialized world.

In the decades before he mounted his bully green pulpit as mayor of Tokyo, Ishihara traveled a mightily strange ideological highway.

Before graduating from college, he wrote a novel, "Season of the Sun," that won Japan's most prestigious literary prize and was made into a classic movie of post-war adolescent angst.

A celebrity his entire adult life, Ishihara covered the Vietnam War for Japan's largest daily newspaper. He wrote a sensational polemic, "The Japan That Can Say No," which scolded his homeland for being a lickspittle of the United States. He served in parliament for 25 years. And he carved an attention-grabbing niche for himself as an unapologetic teller of nationalist truths.

These truths, as he saw them, periodically involved derogatory references to immigrants, denials of Japan's war atrocities in China and a broadside against women. After women have aged beyond their childbearing years, he told a magazine, they are "useless."

In a nation where group harmony -- wa-- tends to crush individuality, Ishihara has proved himself uncrushable -- and politically appealing. For along with his harangues, there is substance, awareness and decisive action, especially in environmental matters. In the 1970s, Ishihara headed Japan's environment agency. He recalls being struck by the capacity of unchecked industrial pollution to sicken children.

As mayor, he ordered a ban on most diesel trucks inside Tokyo and persuaded three adjacent municipalities to do likewise. Tokyo's air quality has improved markedly.

When asked how it is possible for an irrepressible nationalist and a get-things-done greenie to dwell contentedly inside the skin of the same politician, Ishihara smiled mischievously.

"I am a very notorious guy," he said.

Special correspondent Akiko Yamamoto contributed to this report.

To read more of these features, go to the Worldview page at [www.washingtonpost.com/worldview](http://www.washingtonpost.com/worldview).

## **Blogging Through Team Brown and Caldwell's Carpool Adventures**

### **Catch Up With The Team As They Carpool Their Way To Savings**

#### **Carpool Log: Sunday, July 20, 2008 \_ Small Tips, Big Impact**

By JACK KEITH, Engineer, Brown and Caldwell

ABC News Internet Ventures, Sunday, July 20, 2008

[One way to reduce your commuting cost and your own personal contribution to your city's low-altitude brown cloud is to leave your car in your garage a couple of days a week. Your options are countless.](#)

Have your office phone forwarded to your home and work in your jammies. Your nearest public transit access is probably no more than a couple of blocks away from your house. Getting your bicycle tuned up will pay you back in fuel savings a couple of months from now - your health will benefit immediately. Private van pools coordinate your comings and goings with others who work and/or live in your area.

And if your coworkers live nearby, then a slight adjustment in your schedule is all that stands between you and a carpool. You. Your choices. Your cause and your effect. Your finger pointing back at your own chest.

Well that's one set of expectations - fewer miles driven alone results in less pollution and less money poured into the gas tank. Less money poured into oil and gas CEOs' pockets means more moderate reliance on both foreign and local energy giants. Market influence, household budget, earth and air stewardship. A good start.

While in the company of strangers, making acquaintance is the only way forward. The 30 minutes it takes to meet and ride together could be the only time to gab all day. Coworkers are people, too, full of the stories, opinions and laughs that make shared interaction so sweet and unique in this big universe. Take advantage of the opportunity now while wit and wisdom are sharp, because social events just won't be the same at the senior center no matter how hot bingo night gets.

#### **Carpool Log: Sunday, July 20, 2008 – Small Tips, Big Impact**

By SARAH REEVES, Principal Engineer, and KATI PETERSBURG, Senior Engineer, Brown and Caldwell

ABC News Internet Ventures, Sunday, July 20, 2008

Carpooling will be a fun way to get to work and to share time with coworkers (always up for a good adventure). Plus we will be doing our part to give Mother Earth a bit of a [break on air quality](#) and save a few bucks.

But it isn't as easy for those with kids (Jack doesn't have any offspring yet, but we both do). We expect that it might be a little challenging coordinating schedules and responding to emergencies. Hopefully there will be no need during our carpool week.

Kids make you a little less flexible with your time and therefore with your ability to carpool. Hopefully we won't get Jack's underoos in a wrinkle over our need to leave at a certain time or possible delays in the morning because one of the kids wet the bed or bumped their head. We'll see.

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[Fresno Bee editorial, Sunday, July 20, 2008:](#)

## **It's only fair that those who drive less pay less for insurance**

Car-crazy California should join other states that reward motorists who drive less. It's called mileage-based car insurance, and you would have to "verify" your miles driven to get the car insurance break.

In a time of high gasoline prices, concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and congested roads, California needs a system where drivers pay car insurance premiums based on their actual miles driven.

Currently, California drivers can get some discounts in broad brackets (such as driving less than 10,000 miles a year), but these discounts are based on drivers' estimates of how far they will drive each year. These estimates are notoriously inaccurate.

Assemblyman Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, has introduced a bill (Assembly Bill 2800) that would base premiums on verified miles. A Brookings Institution study estimated that pay-as-you-drive insurance would reduce vehicle miles by 8% and save most households an average of \$270 per car.

Huffman's bill would be voluntary for insurance companies and voluntary for car owners. It would build on California's current Proposition 103 car insurance law, approved by voters in 1988. Under that law, rates are based on driver safety record, miles driven annually and years of driving experience.

What would be new is that insurers and drivers would actually verify miles driven, with methods approved by the insurance commissioner -- such as electronic monitors that check odometer readings or vehicle service records.

A big plus is that Huffman's bill would also build on AB 32, since it would help California reach emission reduction targets. Currently, 28% of California's greenhouse gas emissions come from cars.

Since it would amend Proposition 103, AB 2800 requires a two-thirds vote by legislators. That shouldn't be a problem. The bill passed the Assembly 72-2 on May 22. It will be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee on Aug. 4 and then go to the Senate floor.

This bill furthers the aims of Proposition 103. And it is simply good policy to reward those who drive less with lower car insurance costs.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Friday, July 18, 2008:](#)

### **Slowing down makes sense**

**We don't need a new national speed law to force drivers to slow down to save gas and money.**

The last time things got really desperate for American motorists, the nation was in the grips of an Arab oil embargo that threatened supplies and created tortuous lines at the gas pump. The supposed solution: a national 55 mph speed limit, which Americans hated even more than the long lines.

This time the problem is not a political bottleneck in the supply pipeline, but soaring, speculation-fueled price hikes. The proposed solution: another drastic change in the speed limit.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo, has introduced legislation aimed at setting the national standard at 60 mph. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., has requested a federal study on the possibility of a 55 mph limit.

All well and good if you don't mind a new law that will be widely ignored. The better solution: Put some of the resources that would be necessary to promote compliance with a 60 mph speed limit into an educational campaign.

The message drivers need to hear: Driving a little slower can save you a lot of gas and money.

Back when gas was \$1.50 a gallon, that message might not have resonated much. But with California prices hovering just above \$4.50 a gallon, it's bound to get the attention of some people, especially with other economic challenges abounding.

If it takes \$100 to fill up your SUV, wouldn't you want to stretch that tank from five days of driving to six? Or seven? The difference in arrival time, especially on simple, crosstown trips, is typically just a minute or two. And driving 60 mph rather than 75 mph would have the same effect as slashing gas pump prices by 30 to 35 cents a gallon.

There would be a few side benefits. Enhanced safety, [less pollution from emissions](#) and a more positive impact on global warming issues, for starters. And decreased demand (not only from slower driving but less driving) could actually have a slightly beneficial effect on pump prices.

There's also the possibility that by slowing down, drivers might be a little less stressed overall.

Cost savings is the motivation that will hit home most, however. Motorists who drive 12,000 miles a year in a mid-sized, 24-mpg car like a Camry or Taurus can save \$250 a year driving 60 mph instead of 70 mph. In a pickup truck, \$470; in an SUV, \$750. Other changes in driving habits, such as calming down, can also have a big impact. Aggressive acceleration and hard braking, according to testing by Edmunds.com, can cut fuel economy by about 25 percent.

Consumers don't know about these potential savings. Policy-makers need to tell them: Slow down and reduce your gasoline credit-card bill. We don't need a new law for that message to sink in.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Sunday, July 20, 2008:](#)

### **Bike safety courses**

I am writing in response to the recent editorial "Make the daily ride safer for clean-air commuters."

There are a variety of alternative means of transportation to the much beloved automobile. Thank you for identifying the bicycle as the best option for both cleaner air and improved physical conditioning. The obstacles to actually getting people on their bicycles as a form of commuting have been daunting in the past.

However, with increased awareness and education, many more Bakersfield residents are enjoying the fun, freedom and benefits of bicycling.

Traffic safety is paramount for bicycle commuters. Currently there are two league certified instructors trained through the League of American Bicyclists in the Kern County region providing bicycle safety courses for both adults and children. These courses cover topics such as handling basics, traffic law, emergency maneuvers and road hazards. These courses are offered periodically, depending upon demand.

Anyone interested in these courses is encouraged to contact Bike Bakersfield at 321-9247. The most important thing to remember is to get on your bike and have fun!

LAUREN FRANCONI, Bakersfield

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Monday, July 21, 2008:](#)

### **Bill the Bay Area**

I live in Los Banos and commute to San Jose to work. On the way home recently, I noticed smoke drifting eastward from the Monterey area, over Hollister and the mountains.

Later in the evening I took my dog for a walk and noticed that the smoke continued drifting over the Valley all the way to the Fresno area circling northward at the Sierra foothills.

The Valley air district should not be charging us to combat air pollution in the Valley, but suing the Bay Area to pay for our clean up. If the smoke drifts here, so does their smog!

Bill Knoff, Los Banos

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Sat., July 19, 2008:](#)

### **'A lot of money'**

Re your editorial July 13, "Bill to increase vehicle fees is a fair air way to share cost of cleaning air": It sounds good. Five provisions should be added:

Salary increases will be based on performance.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will address the needs of the Valley's diverse population and not just special interest groups.

Consultants will not be hired to do the job. If so, what is the need for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District? Use city, county and state workers to do the job. Let them earn their salaries.

There will be an oversight group to keep an eye on every dollar spent.

No feel-good jaunts. Without prior oversight group approval, there will be no jaunts. An extra \$23 a year doesn't seem like too high a price to pay, but multiply that times the number of vehicle fees that will be collected, and that's a lot of money.

Charlie Moore, Fresno

[Letter to the N.Y. Times, Monday, July 21, 2008:](#)

### **Changes in Clean Air Rules**

"A Major Setback for Clean Air" (editorial, July 16) implied that Duke Energy sought to overturn the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Interstate Rule. But, as we spelled out in legal filings, Duke Energy "supports many aspects of CAIR."

We were one of many petitioners in the case, but our focus was to fix the E.P.A.'s unfair process of allocating emission allowances that used a 1985-to-1987 baseline. That baseline is more than 20 years old and distorted how we operate our power plants today to meet customer demand.

Duke Energy is investing about \$5 billion to reduce our emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide by 70 percent in the Carolinas and the Midwest by 2010. The recent overturning of CAIR should have no impact on the operation of this equipment in the Carolinas. In the Midwest, most of the emission controls planned for CAIR and other regulations are completed and are required to operate.

We will work with state and federal regulators in those states to determine any additional requirements in light of the court's overturning of the interstate rule.

*Keith Trent, Charlotte, N.C.*

*The writer is the chief strategy, policy and regulatory officer of Duke Energy.*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Mexico is in sync with the Green Movement. City of Mexico announced that they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12% by 2012. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **México en sintonía con la moda verde**

La Opinión , Thursday, July 17, 2008

MEXICO (AP) \_ El gobierno de la ciudad de México anunció el jueves que se ha fijado la meta de reducir en un 12% las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero para el 2012.

La secretaria de Medio Ambiente de la capital, Martha Delgado, dijo que el plan pondría a la vanguardia a la ciudad de México, que de cumplir esa meta superaría el objetivo estipulado en el Protocolo de Kyoto para reducir en un 5% ese tipo de gases durante el periodo 2008-2012, según fue citada en un comunicado del gobierno local.

La funcionaria señaló que la capital y su zona metropolitana emiten 60 millones de toneladas de bióxido de carbono equivalente al año, lo cual representaría el 9,1% de las emisiones nacionales.

Añadió que el objetivo de la capital es reducir siete millones de toneladas de bióxido de carbono equivalente, acumuladas durante el periodo 2008-2012.

Delgado dijo que para alcanzar esa meta se requiere una inversión cercana a los 60.000 millones de pesos (unos 5.800 millones de dólares), la mitad de los cuales ya los tiene el gobierno local y el resto espera conseguirlos mediante la venta de bonos de carbono y otras inversiones no especificadas.

El gobierno local tiene previsto realizar 26 acciones, que incluye un programa de transporte escolar obligatorio y la captura de biogas.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses conservation of energy will result in saving money if you follow the government's tips and suggestions. During the energy crises, people are urged to find out ways as to how they can protect their pockets and save the environment.

## **Conserva energía y ahorra dinero con los consejos del Gobierno**

**Durante la crisis de energía descubre las maneras en que puedes proteger tu bolsillo y preservar el medio ambiente.**

Terra, Monday, July 21, 2008

El alto costo del combustible está afectando todos los aspectos de la vida en Estados Unidos , desde las cuentas de electricidad hasta el uso del automóvil. El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos ofrece consejos prácticos que te ayudarán a ahorrar energía y dinero, así como proteger los valiosos recursos naturales de nuestro planeta.

Desde 1998 el programa Ahorro de Energía del Departamento de Energía de los Estados Unidos ha ayudado a más de 2 millones de personas a ahorrar energía y dinero. Los consejos de este programa enseñan qué puedes hacer en tu hogar y tu automóvil para conservar y ahorrar.

### **Conserva energía en el hogar**

Desde el aislamiento térmico hasta los electrodomésticos, el hogar consume grandes cantidades de energía, lo que significa un fuerte impacto en tu economía. Además, el hogar promedio puede causar casi el doble de las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero que un auto promedio.

Afortunadamente, existen medidas sencillas que te ayudarán a conservar energía en tu hogar. Considera los siguientes consejos:

¿ Instala aislamiento térmico en las paredes y techos para reducir tus cuentas de electricidad hasta un 10%.

¿ Casi la mitad de la energía de una casa tipo se gasta en aire acondicionado y calefacción. Durante el verano recuerda mantener el termostato a 78 grados Fahrenheit.

¿ Alumbra tu hogar con focos fluorescentes compactos en vez de focos incandescentes tradicionales. Con este sencillo cambio podrías reducir el consumo de energía en tu hogar entre un 50 y 75%. **Si cada hogar en los Estados Unidos reemplazara 5 de sus focos incandescentes, el efecto positivo en el medio ambiente sería equivalente a quitar 10 millones de automóviles de la calle.**

¿ Si estás por comprar electrodomésticos, busca productos con la etiqueta ENERGY STAR. El consumo de energía de estos productos es un 15% menor que las normas federales y un 40% menor que los productos tradicionales.

### **Ahorra combustible en tu automóvil**

El uso del automóvil representa el 66% del consumo de combustible en el país, según el Departamento de Energía. Al igual que el hogar, también hay muchas cosas sencillas que puedes hacer para reducir el consumo de combustible de tu automóvil. Estas medidas no sólo te ahorran dinero, sino que protegen el medio ambiente:

¿ No dejes el motor en marcha por más de 30 segundos para calentar tu auto.

¿ Conduce a una velocidad moderada y no excedas el límite indicado, así tu combustible te rendirá entre un 5 y 33% más.

¿ Mantén los neumáticos debidamente inflados y el auto en buenas condiciones.

¿ Comparte el auto con otras personas (carpool) para gastar menos en combustible.

### **Asistencia para hogares de bajos ingresos**

Aún con las mejores prácticas para conservar energía en el hogar, muchas familias enfrentan dificultades para pagar sus cuentas. El Gobierno también pone a tu disposición el programa de asistencia de energía para hogares de bajos ingresos (LIHEAP, por su sigla en inglés) que incluye ayuda con el pago de las cuentas por consumo de energía y reparaciones en el hogar relacionadas con climatización y energía.

Si desea saber quiénes califican y cómo solicitar la ayuda de este programa, visite la sección de energía y conservación de la página de Agricultura, energía y medio ambiente en [GobiernoUSA.gov](http://GobiernoUSA.gov), el portal oficial del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos en español.

Puedes suscribirte para recibir gratis por e-mail más detalles y alertas de éste y otros temas de interés que envían las autoridades para la comunidad hispana. También puedes mantenerte al día suscribiéndote al canal de RSS . Si necesitas más información, puedes enviar tu pregunta sobre cualquier tema relacionado al Gobierno. ¿Quieres contactar al Gobierno de otra forma? Haz clic en el enlace Contactos en. Ahí podrás preguntar por e-mail, correo o teléfono y la comunicación es totalmente confidencial.

También puedes llamar gratis al 1 (800) FED INFO o 1 (800) 333-4636, para hablar con operadores que te atenderán en español de lunes a viernes de 8 a.m. a 8 p.m.

Terra/Gobierno USA.gov

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses telecommuting has become popular. It is estimated that over 25 million people work from home.](#)

### **Se populariza el trabajo a distancia para ahorrar Se estima que unos 25 millones laboran ya desde su hogar**

Yolanda Arenales

La Opinión, Monday, July 21, 2008

Con el precio de la gasolina acercándose peligrosamente a los cinco dólares por galón muchos están contemplando de cerca la posibilidad de trabajar a distancia.

"Estamos llegando a un punto en que los trabajadores se plantean dejar sus empleos dado el alto costo de trabajar", dice Sandy Burud, quien desde hace ocho años labora a distancia para FlexPaths, una compañía especializada en opciones flexibles de trabajo.

Burud señala que en su anterior empleo tenía que dedicar cerca de dos horas para desplazarse desde Monrovia, donde vive, a su oficina en El Segundo, algo que con los precios actuales del combustible le costaría una fortuna.

Susan Meisinger, presidenta de la Sociedad de Gerentes de Recursos Humanos (SHRM) comenta que debido a que el tanque de gasolina se "traga" buena parte del salario de los trabajadores del país, muchas empresas están viendo cómo mitigar el problema.

Entre las tácticas más utilizadas, según la última encuesta de SHRM, figuran incrementar la compensación por millas, ofrecer jornadas flexibles, y opciones de teletrabajo.

Susan Ascher, presidenta de The Ascher Group en New Jersey, una empresa dedicada a la contratación de personal, señala que todavía existen reticencias en algunas industrias para ofrecer este tipo de flexibilidad, pero también está convencida de que se trata de una tendencia que aumentará enormemente en los próximos años.

"Con el desempleo actual las empresas tienen candidatos entre los que elegir, pero eso no va a durar siempre", dice Ascher convencida de que las que cuenten con experiencia en sistemas flexibles de trabajo -como la "semana de cuatro días" con el mismo número de horas de trabajo pero concentradas en un día menos, que ya ofrecen muchas agencias del gobierno- tendrán una enorme ventaja competitiva.

Louis Provenzano, presidente y director ejecutivo de Language Line Services una compañía que cuenta con unos mil intérpretes que trabajan desde su hogar dando servicios de traducción simultánea por teléfono, cree que eso tiene mucho que ver con el enorme crecimiento de su compañía, fundada hace 25 años.

"Entonces el concepto de teletrabajo prácticamente no existía", dice Provenzano, señalando que sus empleados aprecian enormemente su inmunidad (por lo menos a la hora de trabajar) ante el problema del costo del combustible.

"No es sólo la gasolina, sino el menor gasto en ropa y comida", dice Susan Ávila, una de sus empleadas que empezó a trabajar con la compañía desde la Ciudad de México y ahora opera desde Texas, ahorrándose un estimado de unos 500 dólares mensuales en desplazamientos al trabajo.

Actualmente se estima que hay más de 25 millones de trabajadores en el país que trabajan a distancia con frecuencia periódica (al menos uno o varios días a la semana). Incluyendo los que trabajan de esta forma al menos una vez al año la cifra podría situarse en torno los 50 millones, según la organización Smart Commute, basada en Carolina del Norte.

Aunque a menudo los puestos de trabajo a distancia se asocian con trabajo intelectual o tecnológico, con un enfoque creativo pueden encontrarse muchas tareas que se pueden realizar sin desplazamiento diario.

"Yo solía ir al centro de Los Ángeles todos los días, pero ahora voy dos veces a la semana sólo a recoger y entregar prendas y a hacer las partes que requieren máquinas profesionales", dice Rosaura González, quien hace tareas de costura para un diseñador local.

Michal Strahilevitz, profesora de mercadeo de la Universidad Golden Gate en San Francisco, comenta que el ahorro en gasolina es también ahorro en contaminación, y señala que para las empresas que quieran presumir de prácticas sostenibles -algo que mejora su imagen y reputación- el trabajo a distancia es un paso más en esa dirección.

Y algunas puede hasta que consigan ahorros con ello.

Tom Silver, de la firma Dice.com, una página de contactos de empleo del sector tecnológico, explica que según la última encuesta de la compañía, un 37% de empleados manifestó su disposición a renunciar a un 10% del salario -que en promedio es de unos 81 mil dólares- a cambio de la posibilidad de teletrabajar.

"Eso es mucho dinero y demuestra la presión que los costos de combustible, tiempo de transporte y falta de flexibilidad que impone el modelo de trabajo tradicional" comenta Silver, señalando que la industria tecnológica ha ido siempre a la vanguardia de nuevas formas de trabajar.