

## **Air quality forecast and woodburning rules**

Sun-Star Staff

Merced Sun-Star, late Wednesday, January 6, 2010

MERCED

AQI Forecast for 1/6/2010: 83 Moderate (PM2.5)

AQI Forecast for 1/7/2010: 80 Moderate (PM2.5)

School Flag color for 1/7/2010: Yellow

Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status for 1/6/2010: Wood burning prohibited

Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status for 1/7/2010: Wood burning prohibited

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Daily Air Quality Forecast

More information about the Daily Air Quality Forecast can be found at:

<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/forecast.htm>.

More information about the Fireplace/Wood Stove Burning Status can be found at:

<http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>.

## **Air board puts off vote on groundbreaking development guidelines**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Thurs., Jan. 7, 2010

The Bay Area's air pollution board decided Wednesday to wait three months before voting on cutting-edge development review guidelines to limit global warming gases and toxic air pollution.

The guidelines — the first of their kind in the nation — are so complex and far-reaching that the public as well as city and county officials need more time to study them, members of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District board agreed.

The board set April 7 as its decision time. In the meantime, the agency plans to convene public meetings around the nine Bay Area counties to discuss the pollution guidelines for cities and counties to use in reviewing development plans.

Builders and some city officials said they worry the toxic air guidelines would discourage new development, especially in areas of Oakland, Concord, Richmond and San Jose with elevated diesel pollution levels from freeways.

In another camp, some environmental groups say the proposal should be made stricter to bar development that brings any toxic pollution to polluted areas.

"I'm not prepared to vote today," said Scott Haggerty, an Alameda County supervisor on the regional air board. "There are too many red flags."

Chris Daly, a San Francisco supervisor on the air board, said he favored an immediate vote to help protect the climate from overheating and the public from toxic air contamination that often is worst in low-income areas where many minority residents live. But he lacked support for an immediate vote.

The air district proposes to become the first in the nation to set numerical guidelines for cities and counties to use in determining when toxic air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from a new development is significant enough to warrant a study on reducing the pollution.

The district also proposes groundbreaking guidelines for reviewing proposed housing projects within 1,000 feet of a freeway, chemical plant or other large pollution source.

If the extra cancer risk to people living in the housing would exceed 10 in 1 million, the builder would have to consider that impact significant and conduct an environmental study on it.

Builders contend that the housing review guidelines would discourage development in areas near freeways, major boulevards, trucking centers and heavy industry.

Gail Uilkema, a Contra Costa County supervisor on the air board, said a three-month delay is a small price to pay for the public to better understand the guidelines.

"Sometimes when you have a recipe book saying to leave the cookies in for 10 minutes, you have to leave it in for 12."

### **Another air pollution alert for Reno**

By Associated Press

In the S.F.Chronicle, Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Wed., Jan. 6, 2010

Reno, Nev. (AP) -- The Washoe County Health Department has issued an air pollution alert, prompting another ban on wood burning. It's the eighth air pollution alert issued since December.

Health officials are warning children, the elderly and people with respiratory or heart conditions to refrain from extended outdoor activity.

Officials say conditions that are trapping cold air and pollutants near the valley floors could last through the week.

### **EPA replacing Bush smog limit with stricter rule**

By Dina Cappiello- Associated Press Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Thursday, January 7, 2010

WASHINGTON -- The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed stricter health standards for smog, replacing a Bush-era limit that ran counter to scientific recommendations.

The new limits - which are presented as a range - will likely put hundreds more counties nationwide in violation, a designation that will require them to find additional ways to clamp down on pollution or face government sanctions, most likely the loss of federal highway dollars.

The tighter standards will cost tens of billions of dollars to implement, but will ultimately save billions in avoided emergency room visits, premature deaths, and missed work and school days, the EPA said.

The proposed range was what scientists had recommended during the Bush administration. However, former President George W. Bush personally intervened and set the standard above what was advised after protests from electric utilities and other industries.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said in a statement Thursday that science, this time around, had been followed.

"EPA is stepping up to protect Americans from one of the most persistent and widespread pollutants we face," Jackson said. "Using the best science to strengthen these standards is long overdue action that will help millions of Americans breathe easier and live healthier."

The Obama administration earlier this year had indicated it planned to scrap the Bush smog limits.

Smog is a respiratory irritant that has been linked to asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses. It is formed when emissions from cars, power plants and other factories mix in sunlight.

While smog has been a long-term problem in parts of Texas, California, and along the northeast Coast, the new standards could affect counties in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, the Dakotas, Kansas, Minnesota and Iowa for the first time based on EPA data.

### **EPA seeks stricter limits on smog pollutants**

By Juliet Eilperin, Washington Post Staff Writer

Washington Post Thursday, January 7, 2010

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed limiting the allowable amount of pollution-forming ozone in the air from 75 to between 60 and 70 parts per billion for any eight-hour period, significantly tightening rules the Bush administration had set for the nation's most widespread air pollutant.

The smog proposal, which must undergo 60 days of public comment before becoming final, would help determine the quality of the air Americans will breathe for at least a decade. Under the Clean Air Act, the federal government must reexamine every five years whether its ozone standards are adequate, but it traditionally takes more than 10 years to enact new rules.

The final target that the Obama administration adopts will have huge implications for the regulations state and local officials will have to set in the coming months to meet the new federal requirements. Power plants and motor vehicles are significant emitters of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and other chemical compounds, which form ozone when exposed to sunlight, but sources as small as electric lawnmowers could face restrictions depending on what EPA chooses as its ultimate goal.

Smog exposure is linked to an array of heart and respiratory illnesses. It causes burning and inflammation in sensitive tissues, and can harm wilderness areas and farm crops by stunting the growth of trees and plants.

"Smog in the air we breathe poses a very serious health threat, especially to children and individuals suffering from asthma and lung disease," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson in a statement. "Using the best science to strengthen these standards is a long overdue action that will help millions of Americans breathe easier and live healthier."

Depending on the level of the final standard, EPA estimates the proposal will cost between \$19 billion and \$90 billion to implement and will yield health benefits of between \$13 billion and \$100 billion. The proposal would translate into thousands of avoided premature deaths by 2020, though the exact number depends on what exact limit the agency adopts.

Clean Air Watch president Frank O'Donnell called ozone "one of the most dangerous" pollutants in the country. "Smog can, and does, kill. This action will literally save lives and mean better health protection from coast to coast."

But the administration's plan could spark resistance among industries that will face new regulatory requirements.

Edison Electric Institute spokesman Dan Riedinger, whose group represents the majority of electricity generators in the United States, said "there's huge uncertainty about what this and other regulatory requirements will entail for utilities and other sectors."

Ozone standards have been the center of a political and legal battle since the spring of 2008, when the EPA set a looser limit than what its own scientific advisers had suggested and President Bush himself intervened to scale back the agency's proposal at the last minute. The new proposal mirrors what EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee unanimously recommended in 2007.

Under Bush, EPA set the allowable amount of ozone in the air at 75 parts per billion (ppb) for any eight-hour period.

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to smog: Studies show that children who grow up in areas with high ozone concentrations never develop the same lung capacity as ones who live in less polluted areas, and are more likely to develop asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

Under Bush, EPA officials had initially tried to set a lower seasonal limit on ozone to protect wildlife, parks and farmland, as required under the law, but Bush forced the agency to abandon that proposal just before it announced the new standards.

The American Lung Association challenged the Bush ozone rules in federal court, and as a result EPA agreed in September to go back and review more than 1,700 scientific studies and a raft of other materials which served as the basis for the agency's 2008 decision. EPA also announced

that as part of its new smog proposal it will also set a secondary, seasonal limit to protect plants and trees from prolonged exposure to ozone.

## **Interior Secretary Salazar Launches Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reforms**

The Taft Independent, Wed., Jan. 6, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. Citing a need to improve certainty and order in oil and gas leasing on U.S. public lands, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced several reforms that the Bureau of Land Management will undertake to improve protections for land, water, and wildlife and reduce potential conflicts that can lead to costly and time-consuming protests and litigation of leases. Interior will also establish a new Energy Reform Team to identify and implement important energy management reforms.

"The previous Administration's anywhere, anyhow policy on oil and gas development ran afoul of communities, carved up the landscape, and fueled costly conflicts that created uncertainty for investors and industry," said Secretary Salazar. "We need a fresh look - from inside the federal government and from outside - at how we can better manage Americans' energy resources. The new guidance BLM is issuing for field managers will help bring clarity, consistency, and public engagement to the onshore oil and gas leasing process while balancing the many resource values that the Bureau of Land Management is entrusted with protecting on behalf of the American people. "In addition, with the help of our new Energy Reform Team, we will improve the Department's internal operations to better manage publicly owned energy resources and the revenues they produce."

Many of the reforms that the Bureau of Land Management will undertake follow the recommendations of an interdisciplinary review team that studied a controversial 2008 oil and gas lease sale in Utah.

Under the reformed oil and gas leasing policy, BLM will provide:

Comprehensive interdisciplinary reviews that take into account site-specific considerations for individual lease sales. Resource Management Plans will continue to provide programmatic-level guidance, but individual parcels nominated for leasing will undergo increased internal and external coordination, public participation, interdisciplinary review of available information, confirmation of Resource Management Plan conformance as well as site visits to parcels when necessary; Greater public involvement in developing Master Leasing and Development Plans for areas where intensive new oil and gas extraction is anticipated so that other important natural resource values can be fully considered prior to making an irreversible commitment to develop an area; Leadership in identifying areas where new oil and gas leasing will occur. The bureau will continue to accept industry expressions of interest regarding where to offer leases, but will emphasize leasing in already-developed areas and will plan carefully for leasing and development in new areas.

BLM Director Bob Abbey said the increased opportunity for public participation and a more thorough environmental review process and documentation can help reduce the number of protests filed as well as enhance BLM's ability to resolve protests prior to lease sales. A comparison of the new guidance with current policy can be found [here](#).

"The new approach can help restore certainty and predictability to a system currently burdened by constant legal challenges and protests," said Abbey. "It will also support the BLM's multiple-use mission, which requires management of the public lands to provide opportunities for activities such as recreation, conservation, and energy development—both conventional and renewable." BLM will also issue guidance regarding the use of categorical exclusions, or CXs, established by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and that allow the bureau to approve some oil and gas development activities based on existing environmental or planning analysis. Under the new policy, in accordance with White House Council on Environmental Quality guidelines, BLM will not use these CX's in cases involving "extraordinary circumstances" such as impacts to protected species, historic or cultural resources, or human health and safety.

Salazar also issued a Secretarial Order establishing an Energy Reform Team within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management that will identify and oversee implementation of energy reforms.

"The creation of the new Team focuses on our important stewardship responsibility in the management of the nation's energy resources," said Wilma Lewis, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. "Through its work, the team will promote efficiency and effectiveness in the development of renewable and conventional energy resources, so that we can be properly accountable to the American public."

Under the Assistant Secretary's direction, the Energy Reform Team will provide greater coordination and improved accountability to ensure the orderly, efficient, responsible and timely development of public resources critical for our national energy security. Through its own efforts, as well as by considering good ideas from stakeholders, industry, and the public, the Team will help ensure that Interior is a responsible steward of the public resources it manages and obtains fair value for energy resources owned by the public.

The new oil and gas leasing guidance and CX guidance will be implemented once BLM has completed final internal reviews.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010:](#)

### **Earth: Violations in four of first five days**

By Mark Grossi

There were 24 bad-air days in January last year, meaning somewhere in the Valley the air was beyond the federal health threshold for tiny bits of soot and chemicals.

The Valley violated that standard on four of the first five days in 2010.

The tiny specks are called PM-2.5, and we're right in the middle of the season. December and January are the worst months.

PM-2.5 is considered more dangerous than summertime ozone. And the particles in wood smoke are dangerous, researchers are finding.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, Jan. 7, 2010:](#)

### **Go solar, not nuclear**

Building a nuclear electrical generator in the Valley is a very bad idea. Yes, nuclear can produce beaucoup megawatt hours from a small area. However, it also produces small amounts of hugely poisonous waste that lasts forever, and there is simply no safe place to contain this waste forever.

Perhaps the worst problem is the one that seldom gets mentioned. Lots of land, usually in the desert of the southwest, has to be dug up — mostly in strip mining — to get a small amount of uranium. (Of course, the investors in the generators care more about green money than red and buff deserts.) Let's do rooftop solar instead. A 2007 California Energy Commission study found enough rooftop space available in California to generate 68 gigawatts. This would double the present capacity of the California grid.

We don't need nuclear. We don't need huge solar and wind farms, which need lots of natural gas back-up and are therefore not as clean as advertised. Besides, most electricity is wasted on stuff like neon lighting and pumping water to desert farm land.

Mostly we need to learn to use a lot less electricity and to live more simply and frugally.

*Charles M. Ashley, Tollhouse*

[Lodi News Sentinel, Commentary, Thursday, January 7, 2010](#)

### **Painting our cars white is only one change that will make virtually no difference in carbon emissions**

By Steve Hansen

Our city's Polluted Air Resources Committee is doing a masterly job of improving future air quality.

Their decrees should reduce world carbon emissions by .00000000000000000001 percent. Here are some changes coming your way:

**Work schedules:** Less work means less pollution. City workers will be put on new schedules to reduce commuting. From now on, employees whose last names begin with A-L will work on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, with every third Wednesday and fourth Friday off. M-Z names will pick up the slack, but with every second Monday and third Thursday off. Exceptions will consist of those who still use their maiden names or hyphenated names. They will work Mondays and Fridays with a new day being created called "Heyday." Every fourth Heyday and first Monday will be off.

**White cars only:** Dark cars absorb heat and take longer to cool down. Therefore, only white automobiles will be allowed on city streets. By 2011, all privately owned cars must be painted white or covered with old copies of the Sentinel. Due to harmful gases emitted by tainted stories, other newspapers are not acceptable. Those who choose to paint their vehicles may only use latex paint and rollers. Spraying is forbidden because of minute particles spewed into the air. Masking is also banned due to landfill concerns. Therefore, one must be careful when rolling around trim parts or "Boss 427" decals.

**Thermostat settings:** Winter settings will be at 50 degrees during the day and 30 degrees at night. Summer will be 95 during the day and 80 at night. Those who refuse to comply will be ordered to sleep with the homeless until they have learned their lesson. Our ancestors did not have central heat, and the Committee believes we don't need it either.

**Water meters:** By 2011, all homes must be equipped with water meters. Regulators are not that concerned about how much water we use, since it has nothing to do with air quality. The city has asked for this to help pay for growing administrative salaries. They want to keep paychecks in line with other bankrupt communities. On the positive side, some have argued that meters may actually save homeowners money — especially if no one lives there.

**Fireplace restrictions:** People whose street addresses end with odd numbers, and whose homes are located on the north side of the street may burn on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and every third Saturday. Those who live on the south side of the street and have addresses ending in even numbers may burn on Mondays, Fridays and every first Saturday. Thursday burning will be discussed at future meetings and may never be resolved. Sunday is a day of fireplace rest. The Committee suggests going to church so your soul won't burn. Those who live on the east or west sides of the streets and others left out of the plan are simply out of luck. They will have to use fake fireplaces with CFLs and rolling cellophane.

**Car washing:** One might ask what washing a car in a private driveway has to do with air quality? Well, it doesn't, but there are several other environmental concerns. One is the obvious waste of precious city water that should be preserved for future track home development. Another is the soil being washed from the vehicle. It could contain harmful microorganisms that might flow into the street drains. This could cause problems for the endangered California-spotted pearlescent, iridescent, poisonous blowfish. Therefore, the following remedies are suggested: 1. Don't wash your car. 2. Wash it only in the rain. 3. Clean it with water that has been bottled and imported from Lake Pontchartrain.

The Committee hopes that these carefully conceived plans will be followed voluntarily by the community. It wants all to understand the importance of preserving our environment for now and future generations.

However, for those holdouts that refuse to go along, the committee is presently negotiating with the Obama administration for a lease on Gitmo. The city will begin sending deniers just as soon as the present Guantanamo detainees have been moved to the suburbs of Chicago.

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Air Resources Board declares California the leaders in climate change. Now the US controls emission gases, while last year California demanded that companies and industry inform the state on the amount of pollution they were creating. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **La Oficina de Recursos del Aire declara a California a la vanguardia del cambio climático**

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, January 06, 2010

La directora de la Oficina de Recursos del Aire de California, Mary Nichols confirmó a la Legislatura estatal que California marcó el rumbo de la política estadounidense contra el cambio climático. Confirmó que California fue el estado pionero en combatir el cambio climático hace más de ocho años. Hoy Estados Unidos controla las emisiones de gases que sobrecalientan la tierra, mientras que California hizo obligatorio que desde el verano pasado las empresas e instituciones informen las cantidades de contaminación que ocasionan. Nichols dijo además que el cumplimiento a este monitoreo, que también se aplica por primera vez en el país, ha alcanzado el 97 por ciento.