

## **Could this be the storm we were waiting for?**

### **Floods, commute problems small price for above-average rainfall.**

Sun-Star Report

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010

In case you didn't hear, the Valley was pelted by hail and serenaded by rolling thunder Tuesday night.

The third storm this week doused the Valley with rain Tuesday, causing isolated street flooding and tricky commutes.

And the rain and winds aren't likely to ease up until Saturday. It is expected to rain today with winds gusting to 20 miles an hour. A high of 53 and a low tonight of 41 is forecast.

By Saturday, the rains will subside but the temperatures will remain in the low 50s and partly cloudy.

By early afternoon Tuesday, the sun made a brief appearance and the storm had subsided. By 7 p.m., the storm came back in full force.

Hail almost completely covered the cars parked outside in a neighborhood near G Street.

Tuesday's rainfall brought the 24-hour total to 0.71 of an inch for a total of 2.13 inches in January -- a little above average for this time of year.

Strong wind and rain are again in the forecast for today, said National Weather Service lead forecaster Jim Mathews. Gusts up to 40 mph are forecast in some areas.

California Highway Patrol officers working the highways Tuesday morning saw more vehicle accidents and solo spinouts caused by the foul weather.

Officer Eric Parsons urged drivers to be cautious and slow down.

"It's definitely a busier morning than normal," Parsons said. "(People) don't reduce their speed for the water."

[If there is any good news with this weather, the air quality is good, the UV index is low and burning is permitted in your fireplace.](#)

In the Sierra, there has been steady snow since Sunday.

Travelers planning to head out of the Valley this week are advised to leave sooner rather than later -- and make sure to pack snow chains.

The National Weather Service in Hanford predicts that this week's series of storms will get colder, dropping snowfall levels to about 4,000 feet, which could close Interstate 5 through the Grapevine and Highway 58 through Tehachapi by Friday.

Though snow is not expected over the Grapevine until late this week, "that can quickly change," said CHP officer Scott Jobinger

## **Hundreds of Port of Oakland truckers who followed rules still rejected at the gates**

By Cecily Burt, Oakland Tribune

Contra Costa Times and other papers, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010

OAKLAND — Homan Huang pulled up his rig to the TraPac terminal at the Port of Oakland before 9 a.m. Tuesday to pick up a container and take it to Napa. Two hours later, he had been turned away at the gate and was instead stuck in a creeping line of hundreds of drivers, all waiting to find out why a tiny radio transmitter was not working.

Hundreds of drivers with cargo to deliver or pick up Tuesday were forced to watch their day's profits drain away after spending hours stuck in line to correct problems with the tiny radio frequency identification, or RFID, tags mounted on their side-view mirrors.

As of Tuesday, all trucks hauling cargo at the Port of Oakland were required to have an RFID tag. The tag is supposed to be synchronized with a state truck registry managed by the California Air Resources Board and coincides with the implementation of strict new air quality regulations for port trucks that went into effect Jan. 1. Truckers who have received extensions to comply with the air rules also were required to have the tags.

If the transmitter flashes green, trucks can enter. If the transmitter flashes red, drivers are turned away. That is what happened at most terminals Tuesday, although some were more lenient if the drivers had paperwork and a certification decal from the air board.

"I had no problems with the transmitter before now," said Huang, of San Francisco, who received the RFID tag in November. "I don't feel good about it. It's a quality issue. I've been waiting in line now two hours to test the tag."

Martin Carrillo, of San Leandro, was in the same situation — and the same line. He arrived at the SSA terminal at 6 a.m., anxious to get back to work after missing two weeks while a new diesel filter was installed on his truck to comply with the new air regulations. He drove up to the gate at 9:45 a.m. but was turned away because his radio tag flashed red.

Carrillo had logged onto the state's truck registry before heading out Tuesday to double-check that his records were updated, and he was good to go.

"This was my first haul since the filter was installed," he said. "I was supposed to start my week nice and easy, and then they told me the tag is not working. I did everything I was supposed to do. I already went two weeks without a paycheck."

In an effort to keep goods moving and avoid bottlenecks, port representatives had asked marine terminal operators to work with truckers with bad tags if they could check compliance in other ways. Some did, while others did not. The problems thwarted new and old trucks; trucks with transmitters installed months ago or the night before. Mike Tollstrup, a project manager with the California Air Resources Board, said the rain and "first-day jitters" were to blame for some of the problems.

He said the agency had local staff members working to quickly resolve problems such as incorrectly entered vehicle identification numbers or other database information.

Workers in a RFID tag-testing kiosk on Maritime Street said they were helping about 25 truckers an hour, but the long lines of hundreds of trucks waiting for help snaked down the street in both directions.

Bruce Wargo, representative for the Oakland Terminal Operators RFID program, said he doubted that the weather was much of a factor. Early reports indicated that the problems affected a small percentage of the trucks, and the vast majority made it in and out with no problems, he said.

"In the large scheme of things, less than 10 percent are having problems today," he said. "I think these things will get resolved in short order."

Despite an early-morning computer glitch at SSA, by early afternoon the sun was out and trucks were moving through the gates with no visible problems.

Peter Lee said he made it in OK but had trouble getting back out. John Cameron said his transmitter worked fine, as did Brian Ung. The terminal operator was allowing the truckers who were first rejected from entering to do a U-turn outside the gate and try a second time. Hai Pham did that and it worked, he said.

Even drivers who got last-minute extensions were among those making it through.

Inderjit Saili, of Fresno, received an extension to enter the port because he is in the process of buying a diesel filter for his 1996 model truck. He was able to pick up one container at SSA and drop another at APL.

Sartaj Singh, of Stockton, who was driving a brand-new truck for GSC Logistic, did not need an extension but was turned away at the TTI/Hanjin terminal nonetheless. As he waited in line with

the other rejected drivers, he pulled out a printout from the air board's Web site showing that as of Jan. 4 his truck was compliant.

"I got the green light two times before today," he said.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2010:](#)

## **Greenhouse gas problems from lawns**

By Mark Grossi

Is your lawn a villain in the global climate change problem? The question sounds crazy, since your lawn actually absorbs carbon dioxide -- a greenhouse gas.

But mowing, fertilizing, leaf-blowing and other lawn maintenance create a lot of greenhouse gas. A University of California, Irvine study suggests the activities create four times more greenhouse gas than the lawn absorbs.

The emissions include nitrous oxide released from soil after fertilization. Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that's 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

"Lawns look great -- they're nice and green and healthy, and they're photosynthesizing a lot of organic carbon," said Amy Townsend-Small, Earth system science postdoctoral researcher and lead author of the study. "But the carbon-storing benefits of lawns are counteracted by fuel consumption."

The study will be published in the journal Geophysical Research Letters.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses how biotechnology has not been able to reduce pollution. The industry has not yet developed a commercial harvesting machine that will reduce pollution emitted from fertilizers, while in traditional farming of wheat, rice and corn; there has been an emissions reduction of 20-40%. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

## **La biotecnología no ha podido reducir la contaminación**

Angélica Enciso L. / La Jornada

El Periodico de Mexico, Tuesday, January 19, 2010

La industria de la biotecnología aún no ha desarrollado ningún cultivo comercial para reducir la contaminación de nitrógeno que producen los fertilizantes, mientras que en las siembras tradicionales de trigo, arroz y maíz se ha mejorado la eficiencia entre 20 y 40 por ciento, reporta la Unión de Científicos Preocupados de Estados Unidos (UCS, por sus siglas en inglés).

El estudio Transgénicos, no han reducido el uso de fertilizantes indica que la contaminación con nitrógeno de los suelos cultivables es uno de los peores problemas ambientales del mundo.

El autor del documento, Doug Gurian-Sherman, experto en alimentación y del programa de medio ambiente de la UCS, refiere que a pesar de que la reducción en el uso de fertilizantes es una de las promesas de los transgénicos, hasta ahora la ingeniería genética no lo ha logrado.

Explica que las plantas, incluidos los cultivos agrícolas de los productos básicos, necesitan grandes cantidades de nitrógeno para crecer y los suelos con frecuencia no contienen suficiente nitrógeno para que alcancen un crecimiento óptimo, por lo que los agricultores aplican más fertilizante de nitrógeno sintético de lo que requieren.

El análisis precisa que alrededor de la mitad de los fertilizantes de nitrógeno aplicado en las siembras agrícolas de Estados Unidos no es absorbido por los cultivos y gran parte de ellos pasan a ser contaminantes.

Un ejemplo de los daños que esta contaminación ocasiona está en el Golfo de México, donde ha sido el mayor contribuyente de la "zona muerta" de ese mar, dado que ahí llega un exceso de

nutrientes de los cultivos agrícolas de Estados Unidos, lo cual hace inhabitable ese espacio para peces de valor comercial y otras especies marinas.

Señala que el nitrógeno en forma de nitrato puede filtrarse a través del agua potable y convertirse en un riesgo para la salud, especialmente de las mujeres embarazadas y niños. Agrega que también se esparce por aire, lo que contribuye al desarrollo de enfermedades respiratorias, y mediante lluvia ácida, la cual daña los bosques y otros hábitat.

Gurian-Sherman refiere en el documento que los métodos tradicionales de cultivo ya han demostrado éxito en reducir la contaminación por nitrógeno, mientras que la industria de la biotecnología ha identificado los genes que tienen el potencial para reducir la contaminación de nitrógeno y que ya han sido probados en laboratorios y campos experimentales; sin embargo, no están disponibles en el mercado.

El estudio concluye que se debe hacer inversión pública para mejorar los cultivos tradicionales, la agricultura de precisión y otros enfoques de eficacia probada para aumentar la eficiencia del nitrógeno. De no hacerse, el problema de contaminación de nitrógeno se agravará a medida que aumenta la demanda mundial de alimentos, lo que hace urgente invertir en tecnologías y métodos de trabajo que ya se conocen.