

Air Alert continues in eight Valley counties through Thursday; pollution levels spike

Sun-Star staff

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2011

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District said the Valley air basin continues to be in an Air Alert through Thursday, Sept. 8. This includes the counties of Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and portions of Kern.

Pollution levels spiked on Tuesday at 119 ppb in the Fresno area. A reading of 125 ppb is considered a violation of the federal one-hour ozone standard. High temperature, ozone build-up and lack of atmospheric mixing have brought about an extremely high risk for a possible exceedance on Wednesday, Sept. 7. The Valley Air District urges all Valley residents to take action to reduce their emissions during this critical time.

Air Alerts are called when conditions may lead to ozone formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards. There are steps residents and businesses can take to prevent this. Reducing vehicle use is an important way to reduce these emissions.

Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by:

- Refraining from idling when dropping off/picking up students
- Carpooling, vanpooling or alternate transportation
- Refraining from using drive-through services

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by:

- Shifting operations to early morning or late evening (lawn care)
- Offering flexible work schedules
- Promoting carpools and vanpools for employees
- Implementing telecommuting
- Becoming a Healthy Air Living Partner

The District will issue regular updates during this episode.

To sign up for a free subscription to the Air Alert email notification system, visit <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>. For information about becoming a Healthy Air Living Partner, please visit www.healthyairliving.com.

Bad air, triple-digit heat in Valley today

By Eddie Jiminez, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2011

Valley residents today should be prepare themselves for poor air quality and 100-plus-degree temperatures, authorities said.

Fresno's expected high of 103 today will be accompanied by unhealthy air quality in Fresno County.

In addition, air quality is forecast to be unhealthy for sensitive groups in Kings, Madera and Tulare counties, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

An air alert — called when the area is in danger of exceeding a federal standard for ozone — will run through Thursday, according to the air district.

During the alert, air district officials advise Valley residents to cut down on driving and idling to minimize smog-forming emissions. They also suggest carpooling, using mass transit and doing all errands with one trip.

Triple-digit temperatures will remain in the Valley for at least another day, said the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Fresno's high is expected to reach 100 degrees on Thursday and 99 on Friday before dipping to the low to mid-90s by the weekend. A high of 93 is predicted for Fresno on Saturday, followed by 91 on Sunday. Normal highs for this time of the year are 94 degrees.

Clouds, some humidity and a 20% chance of showers or thunderstorms are expected for the Valley on Saturday and Sunday, the weather service said.

Overnight lows will be in the mid- to upper 60s through the weekend.

\$215K available for environmental grants

The Business Journal Friday, Sept. 2, 2011

Environmental improvement will be the focus of \$215,000 that the Fresno Regional Foundation wants to give local organizations as part of a new grant cycle.

Environmental organizations are being called to apply for the grants that will be divided up for three priorities, including \$100,000 for restoring Valley segments of the San Joaquin and Kings rivers, \$80,000 for air quality improvement activities and \$35 for research and education on environmental cumulative health impacts.

Air quality grants will range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 for a one-year period while river restoration grants range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for the same duration. Applications are due Oct. 28.

Priority will be given to organizations working on projects that are culturally sensitive, serve the most people, demonstrate behavior change, show collaboration with others on the work, engage business and industry communities, trigger matching dollars and have the most impact.

Applications and deadlines can be found at www.fresnoregfoundation.org or by calling program officers Sandra Flores and Natalie Garcia at 559-226-5600.

[Hanford Sentinel Commentary Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2011:](#)

California Focus: Air board credibility hit by lack of change

The departed administration of ex-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been thoroughly discredited, its record of bending public policy to the whims of campaign donors often demonstrated and his own lack of trustworthiness amply proven.

But pockets of Schwarzenegger's influence and the lack of integrity he epitomized remain in place fully eight months after his departure from office, one of the most notable at the California Air Resources Board.

During the last year of the ex-muscleman's tenure, the ARB — arbiter of air quality issues for all the state's cars, trucks and industries — was beset with doubts about its own truthfulness.

Questions arose last year when some of its pollution estimates turned out to be off by as much as 300 percent, as with its figures on how much diesel fuel is burned in California and the level of particulate smog produced by diesel motors. Those flawed estimates were used to force operators of diesel-powered trucks, off-road vehicles, seaport and airport machinery and others to retrofit engines or replace them with new models producing far less oxides of nitrogen and particulates.

The errors were discovered and the rules placed in abeyance only because of the work of an outside researcher using information readily available to — but unused by — the ARB's own staff.

There was also the concurrent charge that the ARB spurred a UCLA decision to deny reappointment to epidemiology researcher James Enstrom after 34 years there. This came after Enstrom authored a report claiming there is no evidence that particulates from diesel exhaust kill anyone, a direct contradiction of longtime ARB dogma and its claim that crud from diesels has caused at least 18,000 premature deaths

Any questions about the ARB's trustworthiness quickly become critical because the public health — and many billions of dollars — are at stake in its decisions. For more than 50 years until 2010, no one seriously questioned the integrity of air board decisions, with politicians of both left and right consistently backing its pioneering smog-fighting tactics. These have included everything from requirements for the first rudimentary smog control devices to catalytic converters to emission standards that led to hybrid and electric cars.

The credibility questions made it clear last winter that a house-cleaning was in order at the top levels of the ARB, that newly-restored Gov. Jerry Brown ought to appoint replacements for the Schwarzenegger-appointed board chair Mary Nichols and others.

But that never happened. Brown kept Nichols in office, possibly because their ties go back to his earlier administration in the late 1970s, when Nichols eagerly backed a long-ago discredited plan to set up centralized smog control centers that would have ended the extensive network of small shops California featured both then and now. She also supported development of liquefied natural gas importing facilities along the California coast, a notion long since discredited – in fact, many such importing stations in other states are now being converted to exports.

So Nichols has made significant errors before.

Now she backs a cap-and-trade system as the major way to enforce the greenhouse-gas reductions mandated by the state's landmark AB32 pollution-cutting law. That's a system where major polluters could buy clean-air credits from others who pollute less than what they're allowed to emit. Nichols has not wavered despite last year's collapse of a Midwestern exchange that operated 10 years before failing.

One of her latest moves is a one-year delay of this state's planned cap-and-trade system, a decision that has already been criticized as politically motivated by some business lobbyists. Such accusations were never hurled at the ARB before questions about its honesty arose last year.

Even some conservation groups like Communities for a Better Environment contend there are better ways than cap-and-trade to reach the AB32 carbon-reduction goals.

The key question for Brown here is whether such questions would still be arising had he cleaned house at the ARB immediately on re-entering the governor's office.

He could have eliminated all doubt about the ARB's integrity by placing a different, respected academic at the head of this agency that has more power and national influence than almost any other in California.

Because he did nothing of the sort, sticking instead with frequent government appointee Nichols, the mistakes and questions raised last year continue to dog the reputation of the ARB, which perpetually needs to be as pure as Caesar's wife in order to be trusted and effective.

Elias is a syndicated columnist on California issues.