

Valley Air Alert begins today

Staff Reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District has issued an Air Alert for today, and may be extended to tomorrow.

High pressure and atmospheric recirculation prompted the Air Alert.

The alert includes the counties of Tulare, Kings, Kern, Madera, Merced and San Joaquin.

The alerts are called when conditions may lead to ozone formation, which could result in exceeding the health-based 1-hour ozone standard.

The alert is the fourth of the season.

“Despite significant improvements, we continue to have significant air quality challenges that require vigilance and active participation by Valley residents and businesses,” Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer, said. “However, it’s also important to recognize the huge monetary and personal investments and sacrifices that Valley businesses and residents have made to date to achieve these unprecedented improvements.”

Exceeding the standard could lead to millions of dollars in fines. Residents and businesses are encouraged to take steps to prevent this. Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by:

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

Businesses can reduce emissions by:

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

Updates will be issued by the district during the Air Alert.

For more information visit www.valleyair.org.

Air Alert called for eight counties in SJV today with possible extension

Merced Sun-Star and Taft Midway Driller, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011

High pressure and atmospheric recirculation have prompted San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials to declare a new Air Alert for Sept. 29. Although conditions are anticipated to change by Friday, the episode may be extended if required.

The alert includes the counties of Merced San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and portions of Kern.

Air Alerts are called when conditions may lead to ozone formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards of 125 parts per billion (ppb) and triggering substantial federal monetary penalties.

This would be the fourth episode of the season and may be the last of the year, as ozone season is ending. Despite a violation of the 1-hour ozone standard this month — which exceeded the limit

by just one hour — the past two summers have been the cleanest on record for the air basin for both the 1-hour and the more stringent 8-hour federal ozone standards.

Exceedances of the 1-hour standard have declined from 56 in 1996 to just five hours this year, the air district said in a news release. The Valley has also seen a sharp decline in the number of exceedances for the tougher 8-hour ozone standard. In fact, the number of exceedances has declined from 633 in 1997, when the standard was established by the federal EPA, to 284 this year. Last year and 2011 are on track to be the cleanest years for both the 1-hour and 8-hour ozone standards throughout the San Joaquin Valley, according to the news release.

“Despite significant improvements, we continue to have significant air quality challenges that require vigilance and active participation by Valley residents and businesses. However, it’s also important to recognize the huge monetary and personal investments and sacrifices that Valley businesses and residents have made to date to achieve these unprecedented improvements,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer.

About 80 percent of the Valley’s ozone-forming emissions are produced by vehicle use. Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by refraining from idling when dropping off or picking up students, carpooling or vanpooling, and refraining from using drive-through services.

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by shifting operations to early morning or late evening, as in lawn care; offering flexible work schedules, and encouraging carools and vanpools for employees. Businesses can also enroll at no cost in the Healthy Air Living Partner program. For more information about Air Alerts, please visit http://www.valleyair.org/AirAlert/AirAlert_Landing.htm. To sign up for a free subscription to the Air Alert email notification system please visit <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>.

To receive information about becoming a Healthy Air Living Partner, please visit www.healthyairliving.com.

San Joaquin air officials post another alert

Modesto Bee, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011

For the fourth time this year, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued an air alert.

The alert is effective through today.

Conditions are expected to ease Friday, but if they don't, it will be extended, officials said.

Air alerts are called when conditions may lead to ozone formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards of 125 parts per billion and triggering substantial federal penalties.

About 80 percent of the valley's ozone-forming emissions are produced by vehicle use.

Hotter weather helps trigger higher ozone; highs are supposed to remain in the mid-90s today before falling a bit Friday and into the 80s on Saturday.

Cooler Valley weather coming this weekend

By Eddie Jiminez, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2011

Highs in the 90s today and Friday in the Valley should give way to temperatures in the 80s this weekend and into early next week with rain expected to arrive by Tuesday, the National Weather Service in Hanford said.

A high of 95 degrees is forecast for Fresno today, followed by a high of 91 Friday.

"Then the cool-down begins," said Gary Sanger, weather service meteorologist.

A high of 88 is predicted for Fresno on Saturday and 86 on Sunday. The normal high this time of the year is 87, Sanger said.

A slight chance of rain is possible Friday through Sunday for the Valley.

Low to mid-80s are forecast around the Valley for Monday and Tuesday.

Rain is expected to move into the Valley late Tuesday afternoon and early evening and continue into Wednesday, Sanger said.

Parts of the Valley could get a tenth to a quarter-inch of rain from the storm, which also could bring a few inches of snow as low as 6,000 feet in the Sierra.

Daytime highs could dip into the upper 70s by Wednesday.

Overnight lows will be in the 60s through the weekend, dropping into the upper 50s early next week.

Meanwhile, an air alert for the Valley has been called for today because of expected ozone buildup, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said.

The alert — called when an area is in danger of exceeding a federal standard for ozone — could possibly be extended until Friday, district officials said.

The air district alert asks people not to idle their cars when picking up or dropping off students, to skip drive-throughs, to carpool or to use an alternate form of transportation.

The air alert is in effect for the counties of Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin and portions of Kern County.

Cap and trade wins California Supreme Court ruling

By Bob Egelko, staff writer

San Francisco Chronicle, Thursday, September 29, 2011

Over some environmentalists' objections, the state Supreme Court voted Wednesday to let California air-quality regulators go ahead with a market-oriented cap-and-trade system of pollution credits to combat global warming while appealing a judge's order to look harder at alternatives.

The order came in a case that has divided mainstream environmental groups, which support cap and trade, and antipoverty "environmental justice" organizations, which argue that the market approach exposes poor and minority communities to more pollution.

At issue is the implementation of AB32, California's first-in-the-nation global warming law, which requires the state to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020.

The state Air Resources Board's chosen strategy is cap and trade, which sets industrywide limits on emissions and reduces them each year through 2020. Businesses that exceed their maximums can buy allowances from other companies, and can also meet their goals through environmentally friendly actions such as planting trees anywhere in the world.

Business lobbies and conservatives have defeated national cap-and-trade proposals in Congress and questioned the need for emission limits. Plaintiffs in a California lawsuit, however, call the plan too weak and predict companies that buy the right to exceed emission limits will also spew more conventional pollutants on nearby communities.

They won a ruling in May from San Francisco Superior Court Judge Ernest Goldsmith, who said the air board had not seriously considered other options, like strict, nontradable limits on emissions and a tax on gasoline and other carbon-containing fuels. He ordered the Air Resources Board to stop work on cap and trade until it conducted an environmental study of alternatives.

The board says it has already studied and rejected those options. It has also announced that it will delay enforcement of cap-and-trade rules against polluters until January 2013 to allow more time for preparation and fine-tuning.

In the meantime, the board has asked a state appeals court to overturn Goldsmith's ruling that it failed to conduct the full review required by state law.

The appellate court has not ruled on that question, but it issued an order in June, without comment, suspending Goldsmith's injunction and allowing the air board to resume work on developing the cap-and-trade system during its appeal.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit asked the state's high court to lift the stay and reinstate Goldsmith's order. The court unanimously refused Wednesday.

The board's opponents are disappointed but undaunted, said attorney Alegria De La Cruz of the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment. "This case is far from over," she said.

The case is California Air Resources Board vs. Association of Irrigated Residents, S195112.

District declares air alert for Thursday

Business Journal Wed., Sept. 28, 2011

Valley air officials have declared an air alert for Thursday after high pressure and atmospheric conditions threatened to lead to an ozone formation that exceeds health-based standards.

The air alert includes the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and portions of Kern. Conditions are expected to change by Friday.

Air alerts are called when conditions threaten to exceed ozone standards of 125 parts per billion, which trigger substantial federal monetary penalties. Thursday's alert would be the fourth of the season.

"Despite significant improvements, we continue to have significant air quality challenges that require vigilance and active participation by Valley residents and businesses," said Seyed Sadredin, executive director and air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Approximately 80 percent of the Valley's ozone-forming emissions are produced by vehicle use. Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by refraining from idling when dropping off or picking up students, carpooling or vanpooling, and refraining from using drive-through services.

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by shifting operations to early morning or late evening, as in lawn care, offering flexible work schedules, and encouraging carpools and vanpools for employees.

Air quality takes toll on Latino families

By Rebecca Plevin/Vida en el Valle

Vida en el Valle Tuesday, September 27th, 2011

Fresno resident María Arevalo does not need an air quality monitor to know when the San Joaquín Valley air is severely polluted. Her health, and the health of her children, are the strongest indicators of local air quality.

Two of Arevalo's six kids suffer from severe asthma. One child's asthma flares up when the air is particularly polluted, as it was last week when regional ozone levels reached unhealthy levels multiple times.

Arevalo herself was recently bed-bound for days with an allergy attack that caused pain in her eyes, head and throat. Because she is uninsured, her only option was to buy allergy medicine at the pharmacy.

But Arevalo's family's experiences with air pollution and its associated health problems are not unique.

Half of all California Latinos face health risks due to living in counties with polluted air, according to a new study, 'U.S. Latinos & Air Pollution,' which was co-authored by the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Latino Coalition on Climate Change, the Center for American Progress and the National Wildlife Federation.

Nationwide, nearly one out of every two Latinos lives in the country's top 25 most ozone-polluted cities.

Of the nation's ten most ozone-polluted cities and regions, eight are in California and six -- including Bakersfield-Delano, Visalia-Porterville, Fresno-Madera, Sacramento-Arden Arcade-Yuba City, Hanford-Corcoran, and Merced -- are in the heavily Latino San Joaquín Valley.

Air pollution can lead to increased risk of respiratory diseases, including asthma, lung cancer and chronic bronchitis, and can contribute to premature death. Latinos are especially vulnerable to these air pollution-related problems, since more than a quarter nationwide live in poverty, and nearly one in three lack health insurance, the report says.

The report calls for stricter air quality policies, including a more protective ozone standard, which could prevent thousands of premature deaths, asthma attacks, hospital and emergency room visits, heart attacks, and missed days of school and work. The Obama Administration announced earlier this month it would delay a revision of the current ozone standard.

The conclusions of the study did not surprise Assemblyman Henry T. Perea, D -- Fresno.

Due to economics and poor land use planning, people of color tend to live in the poor communities that are more burdened by pollution, but it should not be this way, he said.

"People of color often live in the poorer parts of the community, where you have a lot of environmental justice issues that exist," he said, noting that many communities of color are clustered near freeways, rendering plants, or waste dumps.

"Should these places be located next to any neighborhood, regardless of color? The answer is 'no.' I think better land use plan can go a long way."

Along with better land use planning, Perea said improved access to health care, improved public transportation, and renewable energy policies could improve the health and air quality in Latino communities, while also creating more jobs.

Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez, D-Coachella, said the fact that Latinos are heavily impacted by poor air quality is an environmental justice and social justice issue.

"At the end of the day, place does matter and so does race, and so does class," Pérez said. "The truth is that, for Latinos in this case, they are disproportionately impacted negatively according to where they live."

That disparity, he said, is best solved through policies that create long-term change.

And the good news is that Latinos support environmental policies that would improve air quality, and they are a growing force at the ballot box, according to the report.

A recent Public Policy Institute of California study found 87 percent of Latino voters in the state believe the government should regulate greenhouse gas emissions, and 81 percent said they would like to see stronger air pollution standards for new vehicles, according to the study.

Arevalo, of Fresno, is the perfect example. She can't vote in this country, but she still does her part to improve air quality in the heavily polluted Valley.

During the San Joaquín Valley Air Pollution Control District's air alerts -- when the Valley is experiencing conditions that could lead to exceeding a health-based smog standard -- Arevalo strives to not drive her car.

A member of the local community group Latinos United for Clean Air, Arevalo also uses non-toxic house cleaning products, which she makes out of household items like vinegar and Borax. She teaches her friends and neighbors to make and use these products, too.

Air pollution, she said, "doesn't discriminate." Improving air quality, she said, "is for everybody."

"We all have an obligation to take care of the environment."