

Smog tests free Saturday at Modesto JC Saturday

Modesto Bee, Sat., Nov. 12, 2011

Car, truck and van owners who need smog tests for their vehicles have a one-day shot to do it for free.

A grant from the Reformulated Gasoline Settlement fund, which promotes clean air and fuel efficiency benefits for Californians, will pay for free tests to the first 525 drivers who come to the Modesto Junior College West Campus on Nov. 19.

All cars must have been registered in the state for at least six months. Owners of cars that don't pass the emissions test will receive \$500 vouchers for repairs at a local Gold Shield smog shop.

The event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 2201 Blue Gum Ave., parking lot 208, Modesto. For more, e-mail ModestoEvent@valley-can.org or call (800) 806-2004.

Patterson charged up for opening of EV station

by PI Staff Patterson Irrigator

Patterson Irrigator, Fri., Nov. 11, 2011

What: Electric vehicle charging station opening

Where: Best Western Villa Del Lago, 2959 Speno Drive, Patterson

When: Wednesday, Nov. 16, 11 a.m.

Patterson will be among the first along the Interstate 5 corridor to offer an electric- vehicle charging station right next to the freeway starting next week. A commercial EV charging station with six car chargers will open Wednesday, Nov. 16, at the Best Western Plus Villa Del Lago just seconds off of the main freeway.

"When you think about overnight travelers who depart the next day, hotels are ideal locations for EV charging," said Dominic Speno, managing general partner of the Best Western Villa Del Lago. "It's exciting to be able to expand opportunities for EV owners to travel distances previously perceived as unattainable.

Dignitaries including Mayor Luis Molina as well as representatives from the offices of Assemblyman Bill Berryhill, State Sen. Anthony Cannella and the Turlock Irrigation District will be on hand for an opening ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the historic occasion.

While charging stations can be found at Nissan dealerships in Modesto, Tracy, Stockton and Merced, they are still something of a rarity in the San Joaquin Valley. U.S. Department of Energy data indicates that the Best Western project would be the only charging station along a 350-mile stretch of I-5 between Sacramento and Valencia.

Golden Valley Health Centers is installing electric vehicle chargers as part of its expansion project at Highway 33 and C Street, slated to open in early 2012. The future O'Reilly Auto Parts store, to be built at Sperry Avenue west of Highway 33, and the Arco AM/PM service station that will open at Sperry and Ward avenues, also will have two chargers each. Construction on both of those projects will likely take place in the coming months.

Speno teamed up with TID to install the six electric vehicle chargers in the hotel's parking lot, making it the first charging station within TID's electrical service area and the second in Stanislaus County.

Fire Fuels Management News: Kern County Fire to Conduct Prescribed Burns

The Mountain Enterprise, Fri., Nov. 11, 2011

FRAZIER PARK, CA--Kern County Fire Department alerts mountain communities residents of prescribed burns in rural areas, beginning this week:

"Commencing this week and through out the coming months, Kern County Fire Department hand crews will be conducting burning of hazardous vegetation slash piles. Burning operations will be in the areas of Tehachapi, Frazier Park, and Kern River Valley. This will only be carried out when weather and air quality allows. Please be aware that during this time there may be smoke in the area.

These slash piles are the result of fuels maintenance projects conducted over the summer months. Grant Funded projects continue to allow the Kern County Fire Department Air and Wildland Division's personnel to carry out fuels management projects to protect our local communities. Once again the fuel break projects previously created have assisted firefighters in their efforts to protect residents during this year's wildfire season."

Greenhouse gases climbing, federal report finds

The Annual Greenhouse Gas Index, which measures the combined heating effect of the top greenhouse gases, has risen 29% since 1990.

By Dean Kuipers, staff writer
L.A. Times, Fri., Nov. 11, 2011

Greenhouse gases are building at a steep rate in the atmosphere, the nation's top climate agency reported, renewing concern that global warming may be accelerating.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Annual Greenhouse Gas Index, which indexes the key gases known to trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, rose 1.5% from 2009 to 2010, the agency reported.

The reported rise comes on top of an analysis by the Energy Department last week saying that global emissions of carbon dioxide, a key, long-lived greenhouse gas, had jumped by the biggest increment on record in 2010. The figures showed a 6% increase from the year before, a steeper rise than worst-case scenarios that had been laid out by climate experts four years before.

The Annual Greenhouse Gas Index number, by contrast, looks small, but has big impact. The index is a measure of the combined heating effect of the top greenhouse gases during their life spans as the gases float around in the atmosphere. The number increased from 1.27 in 2009 to 1.29 in 2010. Since the index started in 1990, which the NOAA team chose as a baseline, the increase has been 29%.

"The way you have to look at these things is over time. So we're up over 20% over where we were in 1990, in our effort to cut greenhouse gases. So we're not doing very well," said Jim Butler, director of the Global Monitoring Division of NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colo., which produces the Annual Greenhouse Gas Index.

Numbers on the index, Butler points out, do not correlate directly to degrees difference in temperature. But when it goes up, warming potential increases.

"The sum of all of those tells you how much we're increasing the warming potential of the atmosphere," Butler said. "The analogy I use is the electric blanket. The numbers on the electric blanket don't correlate to specific temperatures. If you're really comfortable with it set on 3, and then you gradually turn it up to 6 to get warmer, at first you don't notice anything. But in a little while you will, and then you're going to stop turning it up, but you're going to continue to get hotter."

NOAA measures the gases in the atmosphere that most directly affect global warming, which it can do, Butler said, "with extreme accuracy." The top five gases — carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and two chlorofluorocarbons called CFC11 and CFC12 — are responsible for more than 95% of the warming effect. About 15 other gases make up the last 5%.

Carbon dioxide is the biggest contributor, the longest-lived and most abundant of the gases. CO₂ levels rose to an average of 389 parts per million in 2010, compared with 386 ppm in 2009. Back in the 1880s, before the Industrial Revolution, the CO₂ concentration in the atmosphere was about 280 ppm. Other gases are showing similar increases.

One bit of good news in the report: Concentrations of chlorofluorocarbons are dropping, albeit very slowly, largely because of a ban instituted in 1989 on ozone-depleting aerosol spray propellants.

The greenhouse gas index was created to better express the heat-trapping potential of a gas, called "radiative forcing," which is measured in watts per square meter. "This looked like a good way of presenting much of what we do within our organization, so people can understand the real effects," Butler said.