

Kings off 1-day wood burn ban

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Wed., Nov. 16, 2011

HANFORD — Kings County residents were again able to burn wood cleanly in their fireplaces today, after much of the Central Valley was banned from the practice Tuesday because of poor air quality.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said conditions Tuesday led to the ban in Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced and Stanislaus counties. As of today, only Kings and Merced were removed from the list. It was the third time since the start of the month that Kings County had received a one-day ban of wood burning.

Daily wood-burning forecasts are available at 4:30 p.m. for the upcoming day at 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463) or online at www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnpage.htm.

Patterson charges forward with EV station

by Nick Rappley

Patterson Irrigator, Wed., Nov. 16, 2011

Patterson may become a destination spot for Teslas, the Nissan Leaf and other electric cars after an electric-vehicle charging station opened at the Best Western Plus Villa Del Lago on Wednesday, Nov. 16, just seconds off Interstate 5.

The six-charger station became the first along the Interstate 5 corridor to stand directly next to the freeway.

Dignitaries who attended included Mayor Luis Molina, City Manager Rod Butler and representatives from the offices of Assemblyman Bill Berryhill, state Sen. Anthony Cannella and the Turlock Irrigation District.

Best Western officials said it's a perfect spot for such a station.

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

Speno said within the next few years at several major car manufacturers were rolling out electric vehicles and there would be many on the road soon.

Butler called Speno a visionary for creating another magnet for people to stop here.

The whole plan dovetails well with a meeting last week Patterson officials had with Chevron Energy Solutions on how the city can upgrade their power facilities utilizing solar power and retrofitting streetlights, he said.

Mayor Luis Molina agreed.

"It's a nice parallel of what (the city) is looking into to improve our environment," he said.

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 is the only charging station along a 350-mile stretch of I-5 between Sacramento and Valencia, just north of Los Angeles.

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.

A charge will cost a \$5 flat fee Speno said, which would be waived for customers staying overnight at the Best Western.

Herb Smart, TID spokesman said TID would be following the chargers closely to collect data on how much energy they use and how much drain many chargers in the future could have on the power grid.

"We see it as a way to learn," he said.

A couple of other local venues soon will also serve electric-powered cars.

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.

In addition, 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 will have two chargers each. Construction on both will likely begin in the coming months.

Study is detailed look at Valley health hazards

By Joe Goldeen, Record Staff Writer

Stockton Record, Thurs., November 17, 2011

STOCKTON - Almost one-third of the San Joaquin Valley's 4 million residents lives at high risk for shortened life spans and health problems due to environmental and social hazards. Now they have a tool they can use to measure and illustrate those problems for planning purposes or to improve their communities.

University of California, Davis, researchers this week released a report that examines the 300-mile-long Valley's environmental hazards, social vulnerabilities and key health indicators to create the Cumulative Environmental Vulnerability Assessment, or CEVA.

It's the first time factors such as air and water pollution, poverty, education levels, English literacy, crime statistics, and health indicators such as asthma and low birthweight have been combined into a comprehensive index for the Valley.

MAPPING RISK

University of California, Davis', three-year study, "Land of Risk/Land of Opportunity," is available online at regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/projects/current/ceva-sjv.

By looking at the geographic areas that rate from medium to high on the vulnerability scale, the researchers from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change have designated those areas as action zones where health conditions are far worse than the region as a whole.

Many of those action zones are indicated in neighborhoods in Stockton, primarily centered across south Stockton and a few scattered pockets to the north.

Mayor Ann Johnston welcomed the report and its recommendations.

"This will help us be better prepared as elected leaders as we make decisions. We share so many environmental problems throughout the Valley," said Johnston, a member of the regional air pollution control board who said the Valley's ozone level is among the worst in the nation, second only to the Los Angeles Basin.

"It all starts with education," she said. Johnston cited as an example homeowners who use fertilizer to green up their lawns. While the lawns look pretty, the chemicals in the fertilizer eventually run off into the storm system that drains into the Delta, polluting a major water source.

She said the city is in the process of adopting its own Climate Action Plan "to do smarter development. The more information we have, the better we can move forward."

The UC Davis researchers documented that the most extreme concentrations of environmental hazards tend to be located in communities where the people have the least political, social and economic resources to prevent or mitigate these risks.

The report recommends that policy makers and regulators on the local and state levels focus resources for enforcement, investment and additional assessment in these communities identified

as action zones and to work collaboratively with each other and with residents to protect community health and well-being.

The cumulative dangers the report highlighted were not evenly distributed across the Valley. Rather, they were in urban neighborhoods of large cities as well as rural agricultural communities. In addition to the Stockton neighborhoods, some of the communities facing the greatest levels of acute vulnerability include west Fresno, Monterey Park, Kettleman City, Matheny Tract, Earlimart and Wasco.

"This is a research-based call to action," lead researcher Jonathan London said, emphasizing that it will require political will and a full effort across the Valley to improve conditions.

Doubling of vehicle fuel economy by 2025 sought

Puneet Kollipara, Hearst Washington Bureau
In the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011

Washington -- The Obama administration on Wednesday formally proposed a rule that would double the average fleetwide fuel economy for passenger vehicles by 2025 and would deliver benefits that officials said would far exceed the costs.

The proposed standards for vehicles produced from 2017 to 2025 would boost average fuel economy from 27.5 miles per gallon now to 54.5 miles per gallon for model-year 2025 fleets. The standards would cost up to \$157 billion while delivering benefits of up to \$515 billion, according to a draft of the proposed rule.

The standards have come under fire from Republicans for their projected costs. But Democrats and environmentalists said the standards would reduce U.S. oil reliance, cut emissions and save consumers money at the pump.

"President Obama has secured a decade of progress toward breaking our dangerous addiction to oil, creating American jobs, curbing life-threatening pollution and tackling climate disruption," Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, an environmental group in San Francisco, said.

The Environmental Protection Agency and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are writing the standards. The proposed rule mirrors the agreement that Obama announced in July that resulted from negotiations with auto manufacturers including the major Detroit-area companies and Japanese companies Honda and Toyota.

Fuel economy standards will rise to 35.5 miles per gallon in 2016 under finalized standards for 2012 to 2016.

The White House projects that all of its upcoming standards, over the lifetime of the vehicles they cover, would save consumers \$1.7 trillion at the pump, slash 6 billion metric tons of greenhouse-gas emissions and reduce U.S. oil use by 12 billion barrels.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Wed., Nov. 16, 2011:](#)

EPA sued today to tighten soot standard

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

Health, conservation and environmental groups today filed suit demanding that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency revise soot standards.

It's the latest in a five-year battle that began when EPA did not follow its own science committee's recommendation to tighten the 1997 standard. The public is not protected by the older threshold, scientists decided.

A lawsuit was filed over the decision, and a federal court sided with scientists in 2009.

If activists are successful in the new action and EPA is forced to tighten the standard, you can expect a lawsuit from industries, such as truck manufacturers, who will be forced to pay lots of money to achieve the new standard.

Soot is just one of the many types of fine particles covered in the so-called PM-2.5 standard. The tiny specks include many kinds of chemicals and droplets in the air.

The pollution is deadly, causing premature death for thousands of people each year, scientists say. The San Joaquin Valley is among the worst places in the country for this pollution. The plaintiffs include the American Lung Association, Environmental Defense Fund and the National Parks Conservation Association.