

Vandalism hampers no-burn enforcement

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District was offline Tuesday following vandalism of AT&T equipment near its Fresno office, the district said. That meant problems with telephone, email and website updating. It also means no enforcement of Wednesday's no-burning prohibition in eight counties.

The district should be back online by Thursday, though it's optimistic it might happen sooner, said spokeswoman Jaime Holt.

"We're not as accessible as we'd like to be," she said. "We pride ourselves on being accessible to the public."

District employees distributed 20 cell phones to help the communication gap even as they tried to reroute phone lines. Calls to Fresno are being rerouted to the Modesto office; the Bakersfield and Modesto numbers still work fine.

The break in technology didn't mean any early holiday for district officials: "There is lots of work," Holt said.

Copper wire thieves disrupt Fresno phone service

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2011

Copper wire thieves are suspected of cutting multiple wires to AT&T equipment at two locations Tuesday disrupting service for some of the phone company's customers in Fresno.

AT&T spokesman Dan Newman did know the exact number of customers affected, but there have been many calls reporting a temporary loss of service. Among the customers affected was the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district reported a loss of service earlier in the day Tuesday, saying it had lost access to the Internet and phone systems.

Newman also said that it appeared whoever cut the wires was attempting to steal copper, but they didn't get any.

Crews are working through to fix the problem, Newman said.

Air district funds emission –reducing technology

Business Journal, Fri., Dec. 16, 2011

Nearly \$3 million was awarded for technologies that reduce harmful emissions, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced Thursday.

The awards, totaling \$2,947,694, came as part of the Air District's Technology Advancement Program that has numerous companies competing for money to help carry out projects involving natural gas, clean burning agricultural equipment and other low-emission devices to be deployed in the San Joaquin Valley.

The following 11 participants came out ahead in this year's round of funding:

- \$350,000 for Pure Power Technologies of Blythewood, S.C. for a non-urea NOx (nitrogen oxides) reduction retrofit system for diesel trucks.
- \$300,000 for California Bioenergy of Bakersfield for a two-stage control device for a biogas engine system to achieve near-zero NOx.
- \$258,000 to U.S. Hybrid Corp. of Torrance, Calif. for a plug-in hybrid wheel loader in a dairy application and \$292,830 for a plug-in hybrid propane/electric work truck.
- \$75,580 to Energy Conversion Inc. of Tacoma, Wash. for a natural gas conversion kit for two-stroke diesel locomotive engines.
- \$370,534 to Electricore Inc. of Valencia, Calif. for a fully autonomous agricultural sprayer based on a zero-emission, all-electric vehicle platform.
- \$28,250 to Sun-Maid Growers of California of Kingsburg for an emission-reducing raisin tray

burning system.

- \$300,000 to Thermata of Pasadena, Calif. for a concentrating solar steam system to offset boiler fuel consumption and emissions.
- \$250,000 to Leva Energy Inc. of Santa Clara, Calif. for a power-generating burner that recovers wasted energy through a microturbine.
- \$242,500 to the City of Manteca for a serial hybrid hydraulic refuse truck.
- \$230,000 to the Association of Compost Producers of Julian, Calif. for a positively aerated static compost pile system.
- \$350,000 to Pacific Gas & Electric Co. Fleet Engineering for an extended range electric drive Class 6 bucket truck with electric worksite operation capacity.

The Air District board also authorized an additional \$3 million for a fourth round of funding under the program.

UC Merced Connect: Biofuel's air pollution can offset benefits

Merced Sun-Star, Wed., Dec. 21, 2011

The burning of sugar cane fields before harvest for ethanol production can create air pollution that detracts from the biofuel's overall sustainability, according to research published recently by a team of researchers led by UC Merced scientists.

UC Merced graduate student Chi-Chung Tsao was the lead author on the paper and was aided in the study by UC Merced professors Elliott Campbell and Yihsu Chen. The study — published online this week in the Nature Climate Change journal — focused on Brazil, the world's top producer of sugar cane ethanol and a possible source for U.S. imports of the alternative fuel.

"There is a big strategic decision our country and others are making, in whether to develop a domestic biofuels industry or import relatively inexpensive biofuels from developing countries," Campbell said. "Our study shows that importing biofuels could result in human health and environmental problems in the regions where they are cultivated."

Ethanol is seen as an alternative to fossil fuels, which emit greenhouse gasses when used and are a major contributor to air pollution and climate change. But despite some governments encouraging farmers to reduce field burning — which is done in part to protect farmworkers by removing sharp leaves and harmful animals — more than half of sugar cane croplands in Brazil continue to be burned.

That leads to a reduction in air quality that can offset the benefits of ethanol over petroleum fuels that emit more greenhouse gases during their use, something Campbell said the United States should consider when determining whether to import inexpensive ethanol from Brazil or continue to invest in domestic corn ethanol production.

"Unlike petroleum production, the potential to produce biofuels is relatively evenly distributed across many countries, and this is a big plus from an energy security perspective," Campbell said. "However, agriculture practices in some regions result in biofuels that lead to even more intense air pollution than petroleum."

