

[Fresno Bee Blog, Wednesday, April 25, 2012:](#)

San Luis Obispo again must ask: What dirty air?

By Mark Grossi

For the third year in a row, the American Lung Association's annual air-quality report is warning folks in San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles that dirty air threatens their health.

And for the third year, I ask: What dirty air? The two cities are among the cleanest in California.

I asked politely about it in 2010. Got no response. I got a little pushy in 2011. Nothing. Now, after asking again this year without a response, we need to just agree to ignore this little part of an otherwise valuable "State of the Air" report.

Here's the lowdown:

The San Luis Obispo-Paso Robles area is the ninth worst ozone villain in the country, says the 13th American Lung Association "State of the Air" report.

The last time San Luis Obispo violated the federal eight-hour standard was 2008. Paso Robles hasn't had a violation since 2005.

Bakersfield, which is ranked third worst in the nation, violated twice last weekend. That's what a real ozone problem looks like.

Yet, according to the Lung Association, San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles are worse than Merced, which has violated the standard more than 80 times since 2008.

How could any scientist make such a claim with a straight face?

My theory: San Luis Obispo County has a monitor near the Kern County line. It's at 2,300-foot elevation in the Red Hills. The county also has a monitor at a school on the Carrizo Plain, also much closer to the San Joaquin Valley than Paso Robles or San Luis Obispo. Kern ozone-making gases float to those monitors.

The Lung Association did mention this week that the San Luis Obispo problem is an example of ozone transport. If that's true, why doesn't the monitoring data in San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles support it?

Annual report says Hanford air better, but has long way to go

By Eiji Yamashita

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, April 25, 2012

HANFORD — While the Hanford area improved its air quality in terms of long-term soot and dust exposure, residents continue to breathe dangerous levels of air pollution, according to a new report.

The American Lung Association's annual report on air quality, "State of the Air 2012," was released Tuesday. Hanford was once again identified as among the nation's most polluted cities.

This year's report shows the San Joaquin Valley air is at its cleanest since the organization began its report 13 years ago, and that the progress comes from the cleanup of deadly pollution sources as required by the Clean Air Act.

But the report also reveals that more than 90 percent of Californians still live in areas where levels of particulate pollution and ozone are too often unhealthy to breathe. The Valley is among those areas.

"This report shows that air pollution remains a serious health threat to too many Californians," said Jane Warner, president and CEO of the American Lung Association in California. "'State of the Air 2012' shows that we're making real and steady progress in the fight for clean air, but unhealthy levels of air pollution still exist, putting the health of millions of Californians at risk. Much still needs to be done, and now is not the time to stop progress."

Hanford, Bakersfield, Fresno and Visalia were among the five worst areas in the country for both particulate and ozone. Modesto was among the worst five and Merced among the worst 10 for short-term particulate matter as well as ozone.

Hanford was ranked second worst for year-round particulate pollution, third for short-term particulate pollution and fifth for ozone. Bakersfield was worst in both particulate pollution rankings.

Los Angeles was the worst in ozone. Visalia was second, followed by Bakersfield, Fresno and Hanford.

This year's report found a mixed bag of progress and challenges for Valley cities.

Overall, the region has shown significant progress in reducing ozone pollution as well as annual particulate concentrations. But the study also shows an increasing trend in short-term particulate pollution in the Valley and that Hanford is part of the trend.

Ozone and particulate — microscopic chemical-laden particles that can get into the lungs and the bloodstream — pose health threats. Air pollution can cause coughing, nasal congestion, chest pain, wheezing sinus headaches, emphysema, bronchitis and worsening asthma, according to the report.

Cardiovascular problems can also develop and worsen, the report said. In some cases, people may develop lung cancer.

Report: Tulare County second to Los Angeles for worst air

By Donna-Marie Sonnichsen

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, April 26, 2012

Tulare County now has the dubious distinction of being second only to Los Angeles when it comes to the most polluted air in the country, says a report released Wednesday by the American Lung Association.

The annual State of the Air report card gave the county an F in both ozone and particulate (soot) pollution levels.

But as bad as the air quality is, the levels are the best since the annual report began in 2000, said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, association air quality and health executive director.

"It's definitely not as rapid progress as we'd like to see," she said. "But it is affirmation the federal Clean Air Act and the state's rules and regulations to reduce emissions are working."

And while there is still much to be done to improve the area's air quality, the Valley has some of the strictest anti-pollution rules and regulations in the nation, causing a constant balancing act between improving the environment and not discouraging businesses away from the area, said San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokeswoman Jaime Holt.

"We really do have some of the toughest, if not the toughest, rules in the entire nation," she said, adding there are many large industries in the area that have reduced their carbon footprint up to 98 percent over the past 20 years. Geography and climate account for 85 percent of Valley pollution, thanks to prevailing winds that pool smog in the southern end of the Valley, she said.

Those trapped pollutants include ozone, a pollutant created after combustible engine emissions from vehicles are "cooked" by the heat and sun, creating an irritating gas that can burn lung tissue, damage respiratory tracts and lead to shortness of breath triggering asthma attacks, respiratory infections, even early death, Holmes-Gen said.

But there's even worse pollution in Valley air — deadly tiny particulate matter created from dust, ash, metals and chemicals — that gets trapped deep in the lungs leading also to asthma attacks and lung health problems, but also capable of passing into the blood stream causing heart attacks, strokes and premature death, Holmes-Gen said.

Most at risk are the very young and the very old; children because it can cause underdeveloped lung growth pretty much guaranteeing lifelong respiratory problems, and senior citizens because of existing lung illness or heart conditions, she explained.

And although Valley pollution levels are improving, the area still has above normal respiratory-related illnesses in the area. In fact, a 2006 study showed 10 percent of Valley residents and as many as one in five children have developed some respiratory problems, Visalia and Fresno Allergy Institute medical director Dr. A. M. Aminian said.

Progress made has also not been reflected in the number of asthma cases and emergency room visits, which have not dropped greatly, Visalia allergy and respiratory specialist Dr. Rabinder Sidhu said.

And the poor — many of whom reside in Tulare County — have an even harder time with access to health care, Sidhu added.

The report card, released the last Wednesday each April, is meant to be a kind of wakeup call, Holmes-Gen said.

"We want the public to know this is a very serious problem. This is not just a nuisance that clouds the skies. It affects our very ability to breath," Holmes-Gen explained.

It is also meant to show people that past anti-pollution efforts are making a difference.

"Lots of people have made sacrifices and it is having an impact, but we need more people to make those kinds of decisions to improve air quality," she added.

Burn permits available

By The Record

Stockton Record, Thursday, April 26, 2012

SAN ANDREAS — Burn permits will be required beginning 8 a.m. Tuesday within areas under the jurisdiction of the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit includes Tuolumne and Calaveras counties as well as the eastern edge of Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties.

Permits will be available Monday through Friday at unit headquarters, 785 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas, and at Ebbetts Pass Fire Protection District stations at 1037 Blagen Road, Arnold, and 40 Canyon View Drive, Hathaway Pines.

Burn permits authorize holders to burn piles up to four feet wide and four feet high. Before burning debris piles, residents must check with the local air pollution control district to see if burning is allowed that day.

In Calaveras County, call (209) 754-6600. In San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, call (877) 429-2876.