

[Stockton Record Guest Commentary, Sunday, Sept. 9, 2012:](#)

## **Critical time for Valley air quality**

By Seyed Sadredin

Any objective and honest discussion about San Joaquin Valley air quality must start with an expression of gratitude to Valley businesses, farmers and residents for their large investment toward clean air, and an acknowledgment that those sacrifices have paid off in substantial improvements in air quality the past 20 years. The facts are impressive and a source of pride to all of us who live and work in the Valley:

- Air pollution from Valley businesses and farms has been reduced by more than 80 percent.
- The Valley has seen the cleanest winters and summers on record over the past four years.
- In 2011, the air basin had just three days of 1-hour ozone violations, compared with 56 days in 1996.
- We have reached federal attainment of standards for coarse particulate matter (PM10).
- The northern counties of the air basin are very close to attaining the current 8-hour ozone standard.
- Valley-wide, the number of days with unhealthy air quality has dropped significantly and the number of days with good air quality has increased.

Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on your perspective, we still have a long ways to go in our journey toward clean air. Latest science has compelled the federal Environmental Protection Agency to impose more stringent health-based standards that will be extremely difficult for the Valley to meet.

That we have already employed virtually all available control technologies and strategies on pollution sources within the Valley puts us at a critical juncture as we attempt to craft our latest "air quality management plan" for submittal to EPA. We are going through the public process to prepare a plan for attaining the latest federal standard for fine particles (PM2.5) and we need input from all businesses and residents.

We cannot afford to follow the one-size-fits-all approaches often prescribed by the federal government or special interest advocates.

We need to follow the latest and best science and deploy a good dose of common sense. For instance, the latest science indicates that reducing Volatile Organic Compounds or ammonia will do little to help reduce particulate or ozone concentrations in the Valley.

This is due to the Valley's characteristics relating to chemistry and speciation of the pollutants, and our meteorology.

These are the key pollutants that are emitted from large dairies in the Valley. Therefore, suggesting new controls on dairies as the "silver bullet" for air pollution problems is analogous to suggesting that we treat a patient who is having cardiac arrest with a perfumed acne medicine.

Getting rid of the dairies will make some parts of the Valley look better and smell better. But it will do little to reduce particulates and ozone that have deadly health impacts.

Valley businesses and farmers (including dairies) are already subject to the toughest air regulations in the nation. We cannot meet the federal standards on the back of businesses alone.

Further reductions in emissions require significant advancement in technology and active participation by Valley residents in reducing pollution from our day-to-day activities. Over 80 percent of our particulate and ozone problems in the Valley come from mobile sources of emissions. Trucks are the largest source of air pollution in the Valley and as much as 60 percent of truck traffic is pass-through with no business stops in the Valley.

There is no other region in the nation that faces a more difficult task in meeting more stringent air-quality standards. However, we can meet these standards if we develop a plan that adapts the Valley's clean air strategy to prioritize those factors that most effectively address public health needs. Toward that end, we should pursue a multifaceted strategy as follows:

- Investment in research and development of new and cost-effective clean air technologies;
- Prioritize measures that reduce pollutants with greatest impact on public health;
- Consider episodic measures that reduce key pollutants in locations with greatest impact on public health;
- Hold our neighboring regions accountable for their contribution to the Valley's air pollution;
- Pursue land-use approaches that minimize growth in vehicle miles traveled;
- Public investment in partnership with the private sector to expedite deployment of cleaner trucks, vehicles and technologies;
- Public participation in reducing pollution from daily activities.

In short, we have to follow the science and be strategic with our limited resources. We have great faith in this course, and in our mutual efforts, to take us the rest of the way.

*Seyed Sadredin is the executive director and air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, which covers eight counties in Central California including San Joaquin County.*

## **Contest to depict clean air strategies**

Tracy Press, Thursday, Sept. 6, 2012

Young artists have a chance to showcase their artistic talents and help improve the Central Valley's air through an annual calendar contest.

Students from kindergarten through high school can enter the Healthy Air Living Kids' Calendar contest, sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Fourteen student illustrations will be selected to promote healthy air in the eight-county air basin the district covers. The result will be a full-color, bilingual wall calendar.

The district will print 20,000 copies of the calendar and distribute them free to schools, community groups, health care facilities, churches and nonprofits

throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

All contest entries must be in color, submitted in a horizontal, landscape format measuring 11 inches wide by 8.5 inches high. Each must contain a message about how to live a healthy air life. Bilingual and Spanish messages are encouraged.

The deadline to enter the calendar contest is Oct. 8, a Monday.

An entry form with information about the artist should be attached to the back of each submission and can be found at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). Artwork should not be folded or stapled.

Entries can be mailed to: 2013 Healthy Air Living Kids Calendar Contest, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, CA; or turned in at the Northern Region office, 4800 Enterprise Way, in Modesto.

## **California to launch task force on scrap metal recycling problems Scrap metal operations have been loosely regulated and linked to environmental contamination and fires and explosions. The task force will coordinate oversight.**

By Jessica Garrison, staff writer  
L.A. Times, Sat., Sept. 7, 2012

State officials said Thursday that they will start a task force to target problems posed by scrap metal recycling operations across California, which have been loosely regulated and linked to environmental contamination and numerous fires and explosions in recent years.

The move by the state Department of Toxic Substances Control marks the first large-scale attempt to coordinate oversight of such operations, which handle hazardous metals and can generate toxic dust that pollutes the air and the ocean. Because workers use blowtorches and shears to process old cars, canisters and other metals, the operations also pose a fire danger.

"We are looking for those [facilities] that pose the greatest threat to human health and the environment," said Brian Johnson, the recently appointed head of enforcement for the department.

The action comes less than a month after a Times investigation into the state's scrap industry found widespread violations of environmental laws and accidents that killed or seriously injured workers and harmed residential communities. The Times found that at least 23 fires and explosions had occurred at scrap metal operations in the last three years. A few days after the story was published, a Sun Valley operation, Kramar's Iron and Metal, burst into flames and a worker was injured.

Discussions about the new enforcement effort had been underway for a few months, Johnson said, but the Times report raised awareness of the issue among the public and regulators.

Numerous state and local agencies are responsible for overseeing aspects of the industry. Their lack of coordination made it more difficult to bring bad actors into compliance.

In their new venture, toxics department officials said they plan to collaborate with agencies that regulate air and water quality, as well as local fire and hazardous materials officials and others to force the worst polluters to clean up.

Los Angeles County is the epicenter of the industry, because of its proximity to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, where much of the metal is shipped out to factories in Asia. But Johnson said officials would be looking at operations across the state, including places where local officials may lack technical and environmental expertise.

The number of scrap operations in California is growing, as businesses rush to take advantage of relatively high prices because of demand for metal abroad. Many pop up without permits, some without the knowledge of regulators. A Los Angeles police detective said he shut down 12 such operations in the city alone last year.

Exports of scrap metal are worth \$7 billion annually in California.

News of the toxics department's plan was cheered by environmentalists and some scrap operators.

"I think that's a long time coming," said Liz Crosson, who heads the environmental group Los Angeles Waterkeeper.

Jeff Farano, the attorney for SA Recycling of Anaheim, one of the largest recyclers in the state, said unpermitted operations are giving the industry a bad name and undercutting legitimate operators' business. Companies like his spend a fortune complying with environmental regulations, he said, and it is frustrating that others just open their doors with little regard to safety or health regulations.

"I think it's necessary. There's been no enforcement," he said.

Some agencies already have stepped up their oversight.

Earlier this summer, the Los Angeles city attorney's office filed criminal charges against three recyclers in South Los Angeles, accusing them of polluting the environment. The charges came after inspections carried out by numerous agencies, including the Los Angeles County Fire Department's hazardous materials division and the regional water board.

Johnson said his agency also has "enforcement cases in the pipeline."