

Air pollution entering critical period

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2012

HANFORD — With air pollution entering a critical period, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is warning residents to drive less to prevent the federal government from levying huge fines.

The San Joaquin Valley, out of compliance with federal one-hour ozone standards, needs to go three years with no more than three exceedances at any one of the air-monitoring stations scattered throughout the area, district officials say, or it will continue to face a \$29 million-a-year fine levied by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The district has already had one ozone violation this year.

"We are asking people to really take to heart the measures that can keep ozone from crossing the exceedance threshold," said Seyed Sadredin, district executive director.

Last year, Valley residents paid penalties of \$19 million through higher DMV vehicle registration fees and \$10 million in fees collected from area businesses. Individual drivers saw their vehicle registration cost go up \$12.

The combined fees are returned to the district for pollution reduction measures.

Officials are stressing that it's up to the average driver to keep another ozone violation from happening in this critical period of high temperatures and foul air expected to last through Wednesday.

They are urging drivers to make fewer and shorter trips, avoid going through drive-throughs, avoid unnecessary idling, use carpools or public transit and operate things like lawn mowers in the early morning. The worse smog formation happens in the afternoon when temperatures peak.

Air pollution has worsened in recent days, aggravated by record highs for this time of year and a stagnant weather pattern producing little or no wind to blow the pollution out. Ozone, or smog, exacerbates respiratory conditions like asthma.

Hot weather will continue through Wednesday

By Ross Farrow/News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi News Sentinel, Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2012

A generation ago, late-night TV king Johnny Carson would say during his monologue, "It was really hot on Monday."

"How hot was it?" Carson's audience would typically ask in unison.

In the Lodi area, it's so hot that temperatures are pushing the century mark, even though it's October.

It will continue to be so hot, at least through Wednesday, that the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is asking residents to drive less.

The air pollution district has called an Air Alert from Acampo to Bakersfield and asks residents to do whatever they can to reduce ground-level ozone.

"We're 10 to 15 degrees above normal," said Brian Edwards, a meteorologist from AccuWeather.com, a private forecasting service.

The reason the West Coast is toasty this week is a jet stream causing storms in the eastern and southeastern United States, Edwards said. The wind from the jet stream in those areas causes the West to be warm and dry.

"Things kind of even out," Edwards said. "Usually when it's stormy in the West, it's nicer in the East."

If you can get through Wednesday, relief is on the way. Edwards predicts that Lodi-area temperatures should dip into the high 80s on Thursday and Friday, and then the low 80s on the weekend, just in time for Sunday's Lodi Street Faire. It should be in the upper 90s through Wednesday.

However, light rain could be on the way in the middle of next week, Edwards said.

"It's too early to tell," he said, "but it's something to keep an eye on early next week."

How to avoid causing smog

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District advises area residents to take the following steps through at least Wednesday:

- Carpool or vanpool.
- Ride a bicycle, walk or use mass transit.
- Eliminate vehicle idling and reduce the number of vehicle trips.
- Don't use the drive-thru lane at restaurants or other businesses.
- Employers should make employee telecommuting available if possible.

"High ozone levels can exacerbate respiratory conditions such as asthma and cause symptoms such as sore throats and coughing," executive director Seyed Sadredin said in a news release.

The smog alert includes San Joaquin County to Kern County. For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or www.healthvairliving.com.

— *Source: San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District*

[Bakersfield Californian Commentary, Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2012:](#)

So you want better air? Avoid those drive-thrus

By Lois Henry

Do you really want cleaner air? Really and truly? Then make your dang coffee at home and take it to work! In case you haven't heard we are under an AIR ALERT.

The weather is so hot, stagnant and downright crappy that there's nothing more businesses can do (short of shutting down) to reduce emissions.

That means it's up to us, the car-addicted public, to do something.

And here's the huge sacrifice the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is asking of us -- avoid drive-thrus.

That got me thinking. (Yeah, I know, watch yer eye!)

If we're all so hep-ho for clean air, why not just ban drive-thrus?

Ban them all.

Fast food joints, ATMs, coffee shops, pharmacies, oh, and the daily kid drop off/pick-up at schools.

And I mean permanently, not just during bad air alerts.

Idling vehicles at valley fast food places alone produce as many nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions on a daily basis as are put out by a major power plant, according to conservative estimates by the air district.

That's about 100 pounds of NOx per day.

Making folks walk 15 yards to go inside for their double bacon cheeseburgers would add up to a major annual emissions reduction. (Not to mention the possible impact on our obesity epidemic, but that's another story.)

And that's just one drive-thru source.

Imagine the emissions reductions from banning school drop off/pick-ups.

"School idling is a huge problem," Seyed Sadredin, director of the air district, agreed. "That's also been a part of our air alert message. Still, everyone shows up 20 minutes early to pick up their kids. And in the mornings, there's always a big jam at schools."

I'll bet almost every single parent waiting in those idling vehicles to pick up Johnny or Suzy would tell you air pollution is a huge concern for them.

Well, perhaps it's time those parents put their exhaust where their mouth is.

I'm sure the air district could find a way to "encourage" cities and counties to restripe school zones to disallow vehicles from lining up on streets in front of schools. Or encourage schools to ban all but buses and emergency vehicles from parking lots.

Maybe schools could even appoint kids to be "idle monitors" and write down license plate numbers of scofflaw parents. (Which, of course, would go on their permanent records.)

Anyhoo, the air district already employs somewhat similar tactics with developers through its "indirect source rule." That rule incentivizes more compact, walkable communities by charging developers mitigation fees up the wazoo if they don't go compact and walkable.

The district could "incentivize" fast food and coffee drive-thrus the same way.

Here's how.

Sadredin told me that parking and restarting a car produces more emissions than an idling car, if the idle time is 90 seconds or less.

So, if fast food places can keep their drive-thru idle times at 90 seconds or less, they're good to go. Otherwise, they would have to pay a mitigation fee or shut down their drive-thrus.

Customers would love the quick service and the air district wouldn't be restricting local commerce, which it's prohibited from doing, according to Sadredin.

Win, win all around, right?

Of course businesses would balk at such a rule.

But the ones who would really scream bloody murder are the consumers. We everyday folks who sit behind the wheel at traffic lights and frown when we can't see the mountains wondering why the air district can't do something about our dirty air.

"It's always easier to point the finger," Sadredin agreed.

We want clean air, yes. But don't inconvenience us for it.

"We've put a lot of tough rules on businesses that cost hundreds of millions of dollars and that's not been easy," he said. "But it hasn't come close to how difficult it is to get the public to look in the mirror."

Sadredin thought people might run over the air district's building when the fireplace rule was first instituted.

For the record, he said the air district has looked at drive-thrus in its quest to try to meet the ever more unattainable air standards set out by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Businesses have been regulated to the gnat's behind and our air is vastly cleaner for it. At this point, though, more regulation on businesses would come at an astronomical cost for relatively small emissions reductions, Sadredin said.

New, stricter standards are forcing the air district to look for emissions under every rock, including drive-thrus.

"We've talked about it a few times," Sadredin said of regulating drive-thrus. "But we would just get laughed out of town."

Aside from the anticipated negative reaction, he said he wasn't sure of the air district's legal authority to ban or control drive-thrus.

There, now. You can all relax. Your afternoon drive-up taco fix isn't going away any time soon.

But we are still under an air alert through today.

That means the district is trying to avoid another \$29 million fine -- which we all pay, by the way -- by not having another ozone exceedance.

So, please, for now at least, turn off the engine and go inside.