

LOIS HENRY: New ozone rule more hot air from the EPA

By Lois Henry

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Oct 31, 2015

With the Benghazi hearing sucking up everyone's attention Oct. 22, I'm betting you missed the House Science, Space and Technology Committee's hearing the same day on the new ozone standard set by the EPA earlier this month.

Which is shocking because, of the two issues, the new ozone standard will definitely have a bigger impact on your personal world than whether Hillary lied about why our Libyan embassy was attacked. (Discuss on your own time.)

So let me recap and, of course, throw in my two cents.

On Oct. 1, the EPA lowered the national ambient air quality standard for ozone to 70 parts per billion (ppb) for an 8-hour average. The deadline for attainment will likely be 2037.

The San Joaquin Valley already can't meet the previous two standards of 75 ppb (deadline 2032) and 84 ppb (deadline 2024). We finally did meet the even older standard of 124 ppb in 2013. But the EPA hasn't recognized that achievement because a monitor in Arvin was moved, which is a whole other story.

Anyhow, the valley's ozone level is pegged at 93 ppb, by the EPA using a convoluted and somewhat unfair methodology.

So, we have 22 years to drop our ozone by 23 parts per billion. Simple, right? No.

In fact, Seyed Sadredin, director the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, has said repeatedly and told Congress on Oct. 22 that even if we stopped all fossil fuel combustion we still wouldn't hit 70 ppb.

Even so, his goal before the committee wasn't to ask that the standard be relaxed.

Sadredin wants the Clean Air Act amended to acknowledge a few realities that have emerged over the last 30 years we've been working on air pollution.

- Synchronize standards so they don't overlap. We have six attainment plans for six different standards right now with four more in the works and, yes, all have duplicative requirements.
- Different pollutants should be given different weight. For instance, we've learned locally that VOCs, volatile organic compounds, aren't as big of a health threat as NOx, nitrogen oxide. Why regulate for them the same?
- If you're already an "extreme nonattainment area," which we are, the EPA shouldn't require a "contingency" plan. Every emission that can be cut has been. There are no contingency emission cuts to be had.
- Instead of arbitrary deadlines, require the air district to prove every five years that it's done everything economically and technologically feasible to achieve EPA standards.
- Clarify rules around vehicle-related emissions due to population growth in nonattainment areas by allowing states to take credit for emission reductions due to vehicle turnover and improved tailpipe controls.

He didn't even get into the fact that the EPA doesn't account for China's ozone, which adds 5 to 20 ppb to the valley's overall level. But I'll let that one go for now.

The air district's tweaks are reasonable and would go a long way to making sure we're still pushing forward without being unfairly fined and sanctioned into oblivion. I hear Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford, is considering introducing legislation to make the changes this year.

Good.

It's a start, but we still need a lot more rational thinking on this issue. While Sadredin wasn't interested in arguing whether ozone is truly the health bogeyman it's made out to be, I am.

First, air pollution, including ozone, doesn't cause asthma.

Repeat: asthma is not caused by air pollution.

I wish public agencies and activist groups could be sued every time they spit out that particular bit of misinformation.

Air pollution can exacerbate asthma symptoms, but it's not the root cause.

Here's another inconvenient truth: none of us is sucking in 93 ppb of ozone with every breath.

That figure is based on the fourth highest consecutive reading from the valley's worst air monitor. (One monitor in 25,000 square miles, by the way.)

Personal ozone exposure is much lower because most of us aren't outdoors all day.

In fact, a 2000 study on exactly that subject in San Bernardino County found school kids had, on average, personal ozone exposures of 18.8 ppb in Upland and 25.4 ppb in the mountain towns during the height of ozone season. San Bernardino County's ambient ozone level is pegged at 102 ppb by the EPA.

We should know what the average personal exposure is region by region and study those health effects to see if there's a need to reduce ozone any further.

Otherwise, it seems, we're just regulating for the fun of it.

Don't be fooled by EPA Director Gina McCarthy's talk about how the new rule is a "science-backed" way to protect health.

The 2009 Edward Schelegle study the EPA relied on, which McCarthy mentioned in her announcement of the new rule, took 31 young adults at UC Davis and had them do vigorous exercise in 50-minute intervals for 6.6 hours in chambers filled with various levels of ozone.

Researchers found slightly reduced lung function at 72 ppb of ozone.

How ridiculous.

The general public isn't exposed to that level of ozone for that long under those conditions. And yet, we all have to adhere to this new rule.

"The problem is, (the EPA scientists) are very deep on very narrow issues," said Dr. Mike Honeycutt, director of the toxicology division of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, who also testified before Congress Oct. 22. "This process needs a number of experts, pulling together data streams. They need a risk assessor."

Even the EPA can't say whether the new ozone standard will cause any real decrease in asthma attacks, he said. And while the EPA also tries to pin premature mortality on ozone, no studies show actual causality.

In fact, if you're looking for ways to improve your life expectancy, you're far better off boosting your income than worrying about ozone.

Honeycutt sent me a chart showing the possible effect of a variety of lifestyle changes on premature mortality.

If you're in a lower income bracket and your paycheck drops by 10 percent, your risk of dying early increases by 35 percent.

Comparatively, a 10 ppb increase in ozone might increase your risk of early death by less than 1 percent.

As I said, a lot more rational thinking needed here.

Valley winter wood-burning ban starts again Sunday

By Andrea Castillo

Modesto Bee, Saturday, Oct. 31, 2015

For the second winter, most San Joaquin Valley residents wanting to use their fireplaces and wood-burning stoves have two options: invest in clean-burning devices or keep them turned off.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued new rules on wood burning last year. And once again, the district invested millions of dollars in clean-burning wood stoves and inserts, which filter out dangerous particles.

The burn ban starts Sunday and continues through the end of February.

During winter months, 30 percent of dangerous particle pollution comes from wood fires in city neighborhoods. Particle pollution, known as PM 2.5, is responsible for hundreds of premature Valley deaths and can lead to a host of other significant health issues, including pulmonary heart disease and cancer. Soot is one of the biggest problems because it is concentrated where people live.

"Wood smoke is one of the most dangerous pollutants that you can expose yourself, your children and your neighbors to," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director.

Residents are restricted from lighting wood fires when local particle pollution is higher than 20 micrograms per cubic meter of air. That's stricter than the previous threshold of 30 micrograms. But those using the cleanest-burning devices registered with the district are allowed to burn wood until pollution gets above the 65-microgram level.

People using open fireplaces and old burning devices are barred from lighting them for most of the season. Those with the clean-burning devices were stopped only six times last winter.

There are two exceptions to the restrictions. Burning is allowed freely for those with no other source of heat or no access to natural gas service. But air district officials will consider regulating those situations as they come up with a new plan next year to comply with ever-tightening federal standards.

The Valley exceeded the daylong federal particle standard of 35 micrograms on 45 days last year, nearly a 37 percent drop from the previous year but still more than the South Coast Air Basin, which had 25 bad days.

In last year's "State of the Air" report from the American Lung Association, Fresno, Visalia and Bakersfield ranked in order as the three dirtiest cities in the country for particle pollution. That includes soot, dust, chemicals and microscopic debris, which come from fireplaces, vehicles, farming and industrial processes.

The district is using \$7 million in grant funds to help residents buy certified fireplace inserts and stoves, as well as convert to natural gas-fired fireplaces. The inserts incinerate more of the particles so they produce less smoke. Grants are \$1,000 or \$2,500 for low-income applicants, plus \$500 for anyone toward installation costs on a natural gas device.

Only about 3,000 devices were registered last year, which covers a little more than 1 percent of the Valley's households with fireplaces. Air district spokeswoman Jaime Holt said just 400 devices are registered so far this year. She said that's because of the unseasonably high temperatures this month.

"We really don't start to see people get interested in the program until they need to use those devices," she said.

Holt said the new rules were created to save 5.1 tons of particle pollution per day. She said there has been a drop in pollution, but it will take a couple more years to realize the full impact of the rules.

Plus, a lung association analysis released in April revealed the drought is making the Valley's already unhealthy air worse.

"Emissions are down but because of the drought, the actual air quality has not seen those same improvements," Holt said.

Anyone caught breaking the rules can get a notice of violation. The violations can result in fines that start at \$100 for the first offense – which can be reduced to \$50 if the offender attends a class on the importance of following wood-burning rules – and increase to as much \$1,000 for subsequent penalties. Violation notices dropped 14 percent last year from 537 in 2013.

More information

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issues a daily wood-burning status by county. Residents can sign up for daily email status notifications at www.valleyair.org/CBYB. Updates are also available by telephone at 800-SMOG INFO (766-4463) or on the free iPhone app called Valley Air.

Technically Speaking: Electric technology that promises to help clear the air

By Anna C. Smith

The Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Oct 31, 2015 12:00 AM

Transportation has been labeled the last industrial sector to truly electrify.

Much of the pollution in our region comes from vehicle exhaust, according to experts at San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The problem and the solution may lie in the way our cars gain energy.

Tadeh Issakhanian, air quality specialist for the air district, says internal combustion engine vehicles – what most of us drive – emit seven times more pollutants than electric vehicles and twice as much as plug-in hybrids.

Even with tremendous improvements to air quality in the valley over the last two decades, including 80 percent reduction in emissions, there is still work to be done. Many cannot give up a car but can drive a low-emission option and help clear our air, says Susanne Campbell, rideshare coordinator for Kern Council of Governments. CommuteKern, Kern COG's rideshare program, promotes alternative modes of transportation other than commuting alone in a car every day. CommuteKern's ultimate goal is to reduce carbon emissions – alternative fuel vehicles further the cause.

Since the Toyota Prius, a hybrid electric, debuted in Japan in 1997, alternative fuel cars remained steadily in the news. In 2000, the Prius was released worldwide; Tesla debuted its first fully electric car in 2008. Consumers now have multiple options for hybrid or fully electric vehicles, including the Chevy Volt, Nissan Leaf and BMW i3. Recently, hints circulated that Apple will launch an electric car in a few years.

An all-electric vehicle uses a battery to store electrical energy that powers the motor. EV batteries are charged by plugging the vehicle into a power source. Although most electricity production contributes to air pollution, EVs are considered zero-emission vehicles because they produce no direct exhaust or emissions. Because EVs use no other fuel, widespread use could dramatically reduce petroleum pollution.

EVs are typically more expensive than similar conventional and hybrid cars. Some cost is recoverable through federal tax credit and state and local incentives. While EVs have a higher initial purchase price, cost of ownership is much lower – just think, no gas!

Owners like their simplicity; EVs have fewer moving parts, so less could go wrong. There's also less maintenance – no oil changes, spark plugs, transmissions, fuel filters, etc.

Electric vehicles are not a new invention. Versions of today's EVs have been around for decades. Celebrity Jay Leno owns several ancestors of today's alternative-energy cars, including a 100-year-old electric. Even Leno is not confident that the EVs and hybrids sold today are what will drive us into the future. Many say hybrids' complicated dual drive system and EVs' driving range are barriers to mainstream growth.

Driving Range

Current EVs have a shorter range per charge than most conventional vehicles have per tank of gas. Typical EVs last 100 miles on a fully charged battery. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 100 miles is sufficient for more than 90 percent of household vehicle trips. For longer trips, users charge or swap the battery en route.

Range varies substantially based on conditions and habits and is reduced by extreme outside temperatures, high speeds, rapid acceleration, heavy loads or significant inclines.

Charging EVs

There are around 18 public charging stations in the valley. The most recently installed is downtown at Kern Community College Foundation's campus on Chester Avenue. For out-of-town trips, stations exist at Tejon Ranch, off Interstate 5, and in downtown Tehachapi, near Highway 58.

Mesh Cowork also hopes to install a charging station at a planned second location downtown in the future.

Charge times vary based on how depleted the battery is, energy capacity, type of battery and equipment. The time it takes to charge ranges from 15 minutes to 20 hours or more, depending on these factors.

San Joaquin Valley Clean Cities Coalition and Charge Across Town hosted Electric Vehicle Week Oct. 5 through 9. Events included test-drives of the latest EVs. Linda Urata, regional planner for Kern COG and board member for SJVCCC's Project Clean Air, says our region has more EV rebates than anywhere else in California.

The SJVCCC also plans to host workplace test-drives and community events over the next year to drive our community into what some call the era of the electric car.

Farm Beat: Events will explore ag tech and tourism

By John Holland

Modesto Bee, Friday, Oct. 30, 2015

A gathering in Hilmar next week will highlight how technology, such as drones and social media, plays a big part these days in farming.

For those who prefer a more pastoral pace, a series of classes this winter will explore agritourism – produce stands, farm tours, festivals and other fun.

And in other news, farmers can get help buying cleaner-burning tractors through a \$1 million grant to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The details:

Technology: AgTech Insight, based in Salinas, is putting on the technology summit with several partners from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Hilmar Cheese Visitors Center, 9001 N. Lander Ave.

The event will start with beer, wine and light refreshments. Speakers will then talk about irrigation, marketing, dairy management and other areas where technology can be used.

Advance registration is required. More information is at www.agtechinsight.com, or contact James Hunt at 703-508-7936 or jamesh@agtechinsight.com.

Tourism: The University of California Cooperative Extension will hold agritourism classes for farmers and ranchers in and near Stanislaus County. They will be from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 10, Jan. 21 and Feb. 11 at the county agricultural center, 3800 Cornucopia Way in Modesto, off Crows Landing Road.

Experts will talk about business planning, regulations, marketing and other topics for people looking to start or expand such ventures.

The cost is \$50 for the series, including lunch and a workbook. To register, go to www.ucanr.edu/agtourmodesto2015.

Tractors: The air district grant was part of \$3.3 million in the latest funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reduce diesel emissions in California. The money will help buy 75 off-road tractors with "tier 4" or cleaner engines. More information is at www.valleyair.org/grants.

The EPA also awarded grants for school buses around the state, refuse trucks and farm tractors in the Sacramento Valley, and tractors serving the Long Beach Harbor.

"By promoting clean diesel technologies, we can improve air quality, support green jobs and fight global climate change," said Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator for the EPA.

Check Before You Burn begins Sunday

Staff Report

Porterville Recorder, Friday, October 30, 2015

The Valley's Check Before You Burn program aimed at reducing smoke from residential wood burning begins Sunday, November 1st.

"Wood smoke is one of the most dangerous pollutants that you can expose yourself, your children, and your neighbors to," said Seyed Sadredin, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "Prolonged exposure to wood smoke can lead to pulmonary arterial hypertension, pulmonary heart disease, heart failure and cancer."

Launching the 13th season of the Check Before You Burn program, Valley air district officials are encouraged by the tremendous embrace and support exhibited by Valley residents. "The cooperation and understanding of the Valley's residents has made this the single most cost-effective clean air strategy the Air District has adopted," said Sadredin.

Valley businesses, including farms and dairies have spent over \$40 billion on modernizing their facilities, installing clean air technologies, and complying with the toughest air regulations in the nation. As a result, air pollution from Valley businesses has been reduced by over 80% and currently smoke from residential wood burning constitutes the largest source of dangerous particulate emissions during winter months. "The Check Before You Burn program provides an opportunity for Valley residents to do their part to help reduce air pollution and improve public health throughout the San Joaquin Valley," said Sadredin.

During Check Before You Burn season, which runs November 1 through the end of February every year, the Air District issues a daily wood-burning status by county. To get the daily burn status, Valley residents may sign up for email notifications by visiting www.valleyair.org/CBYB. Daily wood-burning declarations are also available by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463) or by downloading the free iPhone app "Valley Air" from the App Store. Additionally, the Air District is offering significant incentives to Valley residents wishing to change out their older units with new gas-fired or EPA- certified wood burning devices which are 20 to 50 times cleaner.

This year, under the revised Check Before You Burn program, Valley residents that have invested in cleaner, certified wood burning devices will be allowed to have additional burn days if they register their devices with the Air District. Valley residents wanting to switch out older wood-burning devices for a cleaner model can take advantage of the District's Burn Cleaner grants which provide \$1,000 for certified wood, pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts or \$2,500 for eligible low- income applicants for all devices. An additional \$500 is available to all applicants for the installation costs on a natural gas device. To participate in this program, visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner.

There are two exceptions to wood-burning prohibitions: If the residence does not have another source of heat or if the residence does not have access to natural-gas service (even if propane is used) then, they are exempt from the rule and may continue to use their device. Residents may get exemption information at www.valleyair.org/Rule4901. Additionally, fireplace inserts or stoves that run solely on gas or propane, and never burn wood, continue to be exempt from the rule. Wood-burning declarations also apply to outdoor devices and chimineas.

No-fireplace-burning rule starts Sunday

Staff Report

Hanford Sentinel, Thursday, October 29, 2015

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Check Before You Burn Program — the district's effort to stop small particle wintertime pollution from wood fireplaces — starts Sunday.

Smoke from residential wood burning is the single largest wintertime source of dangerous particulate emissions that contribute to breathing problems and other health issues, according to the district.

As a result, the district each day announces whether wood burning will be allowed.

Under new rules recently adopted, people who install cleaner, certified wood-burning inserts will be able to burn on more days than those who haven't installed the cleaner models.

On some of the highest pollution days, wood burning of any kind is banned.

There are a few exceptions to the restrictions. Residents whose only source of heat is a wood-burning stove are exempt.

So are residences that do not have access to natural gas utility service.

Stove inserts that only run on natural gas and never burn wood also are exempt.

The wood-burning restrictions apply to outdoor wood-burning devices, including chimineas.

Go to www.valleyair.org/CBYB to check the district's daily wood-burning status and to obtain other information about the program.

Air district reminds residents to 'check before you burn'

The Business Journal, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2015

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is once again reminding residents to "check before you burn" this fall and winter.

"Wood smoke is one of the most dangerous pollutants that you can expose yourself, your children and your neighbors to," said Seyed Sadredin, executive director and air pollution control officer. "Prolonged exposure to wood smoke can lead to pulmonary arterial hypertension, pulmonary heart disease, heart failure and cancer."

This is the 13th season for the Check Before You Burn program and air district officials said they are encouraged by increased support from Valley residents.

Valley businesses, including farms and dairies, have spent more than \$40 billion on modernizing their facilities, installing clean air technologies and complying with the toughest air regulations in the nation. The effort has resulted in an 80 percent reduction in air pollution, leaving residential wood burning as the largest source of dangerous particulate emissions during winter months.

"The Check Before You Burn program provides an opportunity for Valley residents to do their part to help reduce air pollution and improve public health throughout the San Joaquin Valley," Sadredin said.

From Nov. 1 to February, the air district will issue a daily wood-burning status by county. The information is available via email notification and through the free iPhone app, "Valley Air."

The district also offers incentives to residents wishing to change their older units for new gas-filled or EPA-certified wood burning devices. The equipment is 20 to 50 times cleaner than traditional units and allows residents to qualify for additional burn days.

More information on the grant program is available at www.valleyair.org/burncleaner.

Wood-burning restrictions return for another season

By Sabra Stafford, staff writer

The Turlock Journal, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2015

The annual cold weather air pollution control program, Check Before You Burn, is slated to return Sunday.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is launching the 13th year of the program that aims to curb the unhealthy particles released into the air from smoke.

"Wood smoke is one of the most dangerous pollutants that you can expose yourself, your children, and your neighbors to," said Seyed Sadredin, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "Prolonged exposure to wood smoke can lead to pulmonary arterial hypertension, pulmonary heart disease, heart failure and cancer."

The Check Before You Burn program aims to minimize the amount of harmful particulate matter that is released into the Valley air basin by restricting when residential wood-burning devices can be used. From November to February the air district releases a declaration each day on whether or not wood-burning

devices, such as fireplaces, can be used. The declaration is based on the air quality index for the day and whether or not the particulate matter from wood-burning devices would push it into a zone that is above federal and health guidelines.

The Air District reports that Valley businesses, including farms and dairies have spent over \$40 billion on modernizing their facilities, installing clean air technologies, and complying with the toughest air regulations in the nation. As a result, air pollution from Valley businesses has been reduced by over 80 percent.

According to the Air District, smoke from residential wood burning constitutes the largest source of dangerous particulate emissions during winter months.

"The Check Before You Burn program provides an opportunity for Valley residents to do their part to help reduce air pollution and improve public health throughout the San Joaquin Valley," said Sadredin. "The cooperation and understanding of the Valley's residents has made this the single most cost-effective clean air strategy the Air District has adopted."

This year, under the revised Check Before You Burn program, Valley residents that have invested in cleaner, certified wood burning devices will be allowed to have additional burn days if they register their devices with the Air District.

This season the Air District will issue declarations of either: No restrictions, burning discouraged; No burning unless registered; or No burning for all.

Last year the Air District issued fewer prohibitions for wood burning and had a cleaner air basin, partially because of the increased number of residents using the cleaner burning devices. Through the end of the program last year, the Air District issued prohibitions for no burning for all 36 times.

Valley residents wanting to switch out older wood-burning devices for a cleaner model can take advantage of the District's Burn Cleaner grants which provide \$1,000 for certified wood, pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts or \$2,500 for eligible low-income applicants for all devices. An additional \$500 is available to all applicants for the installation costs of a natural gas device. To participate in this program please visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner.

There are two exceptions to wood-burning prohibitions: If the residence does not have another source of heat or if the residence does not have access to natural-gas service (even if propane is used) then, they are exempt from the rule and may continue to use their device. Residents may get exemption information at www.valleyair.org/Rule4901. Additionally, fireplace inserts or stoves that run solely on gas or propane, and never burn wood, continue to be exempt from the rule. Wood-burning declarations also apply to outdoor devices and chimineas.

To get the daily burn status, Valley residents may sign up for email notifications by visiting www.valleyair.org/CBYB. Daily wood-burning declarations are also available by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463) or by downloading the free iPhone app "Valley Air" from the App Store. The declarations will also run in the Turlock Journal each publication day.