



VALLEY AIR NEWS

Air quality continues to improve

A message from Air Pollution Control Officer, Seyed Sadredin

Air quality in the San Joaquin Valley is better than it has ever been in recorded history. With tough regulations, innovative measures and investment by businesses and residents, air pollution has been reduced significantly. Despite this tremendous progress, the Valley's pollution-retaining geography and meteorology make meeting new federal ozone and particulate standards a challenge that is unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Having already reduced Valley smog by 80 percent since the 1980s, virtually eliminating the remainder will not be cheap and cannot happen overnight. On April 30, your Air District's governing board adopted the first eight-hour ozone plan in California. This overarching, comprehensive plan is designed to help the Valley attain cleaner air, as measured by the federal smog standard, as expeditiously as practicable. The regulatory cost to businesses will be about \$20 billion. The board members should be commended for their courage, resoluteness and commitment to clean air.

In fact, an objective assessment of the board's work on air quality gives Valley residents a great deal to be proud of. A child born today in the Valley breathes air that is 80 percent cleaner than it was 25 years ago and is no longer exposed to unhealthful levels of particulates 10 microns in size and smaller (PM10). The Valley is the only "serious" non-compliant area in the state to meet the standard for air particulates of this size, and we did it five years ahead of the federal deadline.

The Valley also is on track to meet the one-hour ozone standard by 2010, the only "extreme non-attainment" area in the state on track to do so.

Under the District's recently adopted eight-hour ozone plan, 50 percent of the Valley's population will live in "attainment" areas -- that is, areas without any recorded violations of the air-pollution standard -- by 2015; that number will increase to 90 percent by 2020. By law, the Valley cannot claim attainment because in a couple of areas we will still see a few days when the air pollution exceeds the standard.

Even if money were no object and we ignored all logistical constraints, the technology available today and in the foreseeable future could not achieve enough reductions in smog-forming emissions for these areas in the Valley to attain the clean-air standard any sooner than 2023. The only option then provided under federal law is to seek an "extreme" designation and incorporate future technology when it becomes available — thus, the proposed deadline of 2023. Eighty percent of our smog-causing pollutants come from mobile sources such as cars, trucks and locomotives, over which the air district has no jurisdiction. More than ever, we will need the state and federal government to do their fair share for the Valley by providing funding and regulatory assistance to reduce these emissions. All local measures that can be adopted by the air district will be in place by 2010. As a result, every area in the Valley will see significant, steady reductions in ozone concentrations and the number of days above the standard.

The measures contained in the ozone plan also will help the Valley meet the federal standard for fine particulate matter by 2015. (Fine particu-

lates are those 2.5 microns in size or smaller.) This makes the Valley the only non-compliant area in the state on track to meet this standard by the deadline. Doing so will eliminate more than \$3 billion per year of the estimated \$3.1 billion per year in health-related costs attributed to particulates in the Valley's air.

With public health as the foremost priority, the air district governing board also acted to seek other innovative and creative strategies aimed at cleaning the air, focusing on alternative modes of goods- and people-movement, as well as alternative fuels and energy.

By any objective measure, the plan adopted by the air district is a comprehensive effort to bring the Valley into attainment with federal air-quality standards as quickly as possible.

Maps of the Valley below illustrate a journey toward attainment with red dots depicting non-attainment areas and green dots depicting areas that have reached attainment.

