

## Today and Friday are Spare the Air days

Merced Sun-Star, July 17, 2003

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has declared today and Friday Spare the Air days.

Residents are asked to avoid driving, yardwork involving gasoline machinery, and use of motorboats and off-road vehicles.

Residents should also avoid using aerosol sprays and lighter fluid to start charcoal barbecues.

The air district issues a Spare the Air advisory when ground level ozone, the main pollutant in what is commonly known as smog, is expected to be unhealthy.

Residents can help the air quality problem by avoiding unnecessary vehicle use.

Suggested driving tips include:

- Using cruise control on the highway
- Obeying the speed limit
- Avoiding "topping off" at the gas pump
- Taking the train for personal and business trips out of the area.

## Ag spending bill to fund local projects

The Hanford Sentinel, July 16, 2003

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The annual agriculture spending bill approved by the House Monday included funding for several projects in the Central Valley.

Overall, the bill provides \$77.5 billion for federal agriculture programs, according to the office of Rep. Cal Dooley.

The Fresno Democrat's district includes all of Kings County.

"These funds will provide important relief for growers in the Valley and across the country," Dooley said. "I am pleased that Congress has once again recognized the need to fund market expanding initiatives and invest in crucial agriculture research."

Earlier this year, Dooley encouraged key members of the House Appropriations Committee to include funding for several key Valley priorities.

Those that won approval included:

€ An additional \$4.9 million for the control, containment and research of Pierce's Disease. The vineyard-destroying disease is caused by the glassy-winged sharpshooter. It has hit several Valley counties in previous years. Funding to fight Pierce's Disease now totals more than \$35 million.

€ An additional \$100,000 through Agriculture Research Service to expand research on trapping of the olive fly. When not controlled, the fly has devastating effects on olive growers in the Valley.

€ \$427,000 to continue the Central California Ozone Study, which includes data analysis and modeling performance evaluations to better understand the San Joaquin Valley's ozone problem.

€ A delay of funding for one year of United States Department of Agriculture's implementation of country-of-origin labeling for meat products.

The bill now awaits consideration by the Senate.

## Unhealthy air is forecast

The Hanford Sentinel, July 16, 2003

FRESNO - Rising smog levels with expected unhealthy air have prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to declare Thursday a "Spare the Air Day" in Kings County.

Valley residents can help cut down on smog by taking several steps, according to the district.

Those steps can include bringing a lunch to work instead of driving to a restaurant in the middle of the day, using water-based cleaning and painting products and keeping vehicle tires properly inflated.

## Anti-burn bill clears hurdles

Assembly committee hold two other Sen. Florez-backed air bills.

By Mark Grossi, The Fresno Bee

*(Published Thursday, July 17, 2003, 7:22 AM)*

After clearing a key committee Wednesday, a measure to stop farmers from burning their crop wastes will move to the Assembly floor.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee approved Senate Bill 705, an air-quality measure by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. The bill would end traditional farm-waste burning that saves money but also sends clouds of particle pollution into the air. The Appropriations Committee also briefly held up two other air-quality bills, SB 708 and SB 709.

The bills are among eight air measures that Florez has aimed at the San Joaquin Valley, which ranks among the worst in the nation for both smog and tiny particle pollution. Most of his air measures have passed the Senate and are winding through the Assembly.

His three bills in the Appropriations Committee have made the most progress thus far.

The farming community Wednesday continued to debate SB 705, which would phase out burning of field crops by June 1, 2005, and all other farm waste, such as orchard removals, by 2010.

Farm officials think the measure may stop burning too quickly for practical and economically feasible alternatives to be developed. One alternative would involve chipping farm waste and transporting it to a biomass power plant.

Others in agriculture believe beneficial uses of fire -- such as safe disposal of diseased vineyards -- would be lost.

Florez continues negotiating with the opponents.

SB 708, providing higher fines for gross-polluting vehicles and help for people trying to fix such a vehicle, was delayed Wednesday because of a minor, last-minute amendment. It will return to the committee as early as next week, Florez staffers said.

SB 709, granting more authority to Valley air regulators in regulating vehicle emissions, was held up for money reasons. The measure allows an added \$1 charge on Valley vehicle registration fees to raise money for clean-air projects, but legislators are suspending action on any measures that would raise fees.

The committee is expected to consider the bill again in about a month.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District supports SB 709 and hopes the delay is only temporary.

"It would be a shame to see cost issues at the state level override public health concerns for Central California," said spokeswoman Josette Merced Bello.

## **Valley faces more triple-digit heat; Spare the Air alerts issued**

By Adrian Rodriguez, The Fresno Bee

*(Published Thursday, July 17, 2003, 7:22 AM)*

A week of triple-digit temperatures in the San Joaquin Valley will keep the air heavy with heat until Friday, and health officials are encouraging residents not to stir pollution into the mix.

Today's high in the Valley is expected to be about 103 degrees. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued Spare the Air alerts for today and Friday. Residents are asked to reduce activities that release pollution.

But clouds could cool the Valley during the weekend. There is a slight chance of thunderstorms in the foothills from Friday night to Saturday night, according to the National Weather Service.

Fresno sweated through 100-plus degrees of heat for the past week, save for Sunday's high of 99 degrees.

If not for that dip, it would have been the longest stretch of triple-digit heat in Fresno since 2001, when the mercury climbed above the 100-degree tick for eight days in June.

Anytime there is a stretch of hot and dry weather, the Valley becomes an oven that bakes airborne pollutants into unhealthy smog, said Josette Merced Bello, a spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Today is the 17th Spare the Air Day since the season began in June, with the Central Valley reaching 169 on the Air Quality Index, a composite of pollutants in the air measured on a scale, with 300 being the least healthy. Fresno's AQI has gone as high as 195, Merced Bello said.

Pollutants tend to build up throughout the week, and 22% of them come from passenger vehicles alone, she said.

"We never blame all of our pollution problems on the weather," she said.

To keep the hazardous effects of smog at bay, Merced Bello said residents should keep car trips short and avoid refilling gas tanks until late in the day. They should avoid heavy work between 3 and 7 p.m. Agricultural burn permit holders cannot burn ag waste on Spare the Air days, either.

If every resident planned car trips, it would save time and money and the air would be easier to breathe, she said. "It would have a huge impact on our air quality immediately," she said. "And it can be as simple as doing grocery shopping where there's a bank and video-rental stores."

The reporter can be reached at [arodriguez@fresnobee.com](mailto:arodriguez@fresnobee.com) or 441-6317.

## **Air board slated to vote today on no-burn rules in winter**

By MICHAEL G. MOONEY, MODESTO BEE STAFF WRITER, July 17, 2003

Amid summer's heat, the valley's air pollution board is scheduled to vote today on a wintertime policy for no burning in fireplaces and wood stoves on certain days.

The board is set to meet at 9 a.m. in Fresno, and the agenda calls for a public hearing before the vote.

People hoping for a last word, or wishing to listen in, need not travel to Fresno. They can participate via a videoconference hookup at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District office in Modesto.

Under the proposal, people would be prohibited from using fireplaces and wood-burning stoves when air pollution reaches unhealthy levels.

The policy is part of Rule 4901. It also would:

Require retrofitting wood-burning devices to meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards prior to the transfer or sale of property.

Limit the number of wood-burning devices allowed in new developments.

The rule is known as the PM-10 attainment plan, with PM referring to particulate matter. The federal government has identified the San Joaquin Valley air basin as one of the five dirtiest in the nation, and controlling particulate matter is one way to help clean the air.

Without a cleanup plan, the district runs the risk of federally imposed sanctions such as mandatory no-driving days and the suspension of federal highway funds.

Dr. David Pepper, a founding member of Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, is a strong backer of the rule.

"Some may argue that it is an individual's right to burn whenever they want," Pepper said in a statement distributed by the air district. "But breathing clean air is an individual's right, too, as is the right to live without asthma and without lung cancer.

"Several communities have adopted no-fireplace laws, and as one of the most polluted air basins in America, fireplaces must be a thing of the past in the valley, too."

Chris Caron, vice president of Duraflame Inc., said Tuesday that the Stockton fire log manufacturer will try to convince the air board to modify the proposed rule.

Duraflame wants a two-tiered system that would allow for voluntary curtailment before pollution levels exceed the no-burn cutoff.

Under such a plan, residents with EPA-certified stoves or fireplace inserts, as well as those who use cleaner-burning manufactured logs, would be allowed to continue using their wood-burning devices during a first-level alert.

Air district staff already has rejected such an approach, arguing that it would be difficult to enforce.

"We think their rejection is arbitrary and baseless," Caron said. "The EPA's own guidelines suggest a two-tiered system. Two-tiered systems are used throughout the West, including Seattle and Denver."

Air quality standards are based on the fraction of particulate matter that measures 10 or less microns in aerodynamic diameter -- about one-seventh the diameter of a human hair.

The smaller the particle, the deeper it is absorbed into the body and the more damage it can cause. Particles larger than PM-10 are almost exclusively deposited in the nose and throat.

Various scientific studies have shown that exposure to PM-10 can harm lung tissue, exacerbate existing problems such as asthma and heart disease, cause cancer and lead to premature death.

Air district officials say the elderly, children and people with chronic lung disease, influenza or asthma tend to be especially sensitive to the effects of particulate matter.

The proposed PM-10 plan is available online, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). Today's scheduled air district board meeting is set to take place at air district headquarters, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., Fresno, with a videoconference hookup at the Modesto office, 4230 Kiernan Ave.

## Understanding heat can help cope with it

By Joe Tone, The Record Staff Writer, July 17, 2003

Have you heard? It's hot out there today, hotter than a lot of things. Hotter than a stolen tamale. Hotter than a billy goat in a pepper patch. The hens are all laying hard-boiled eggs, but if they weren't, you certainly could fry one of those suckers on the sidewalk. (Egg, not chicken).

Of course, there's more to triple-digit temperatures than sweltering cliches and parking in the shade.

From when it begins swirling somewhere in the Southwest, to when you skip work to soak in your blowup pool, extremely hot weather is a phenomenon whose effects are many. And knowing the effects such weather can have -- on you, on your family, on your pets and on your plants -- can make the summer just a little bit cooler. And safer.

First things first: If you're wondering when it will get hot, and you have an uncle in northern Arizona, you may be in luck. When temperatures reach into triple digits here during the summer, forecasters say, it's often the result of a large area of high pressure -- air pushing toward the ground and inhibiting cloud formation -- that starts near the Four Corners region over your uncle's house and spreads west to consume Northern California.

The high pressure cuts off the cool air that normally flows inland from the Pacific, limiting the breeze to the coast and making you wish your uncle would move to Santa Cruz or at least secure a time share there.

And in metropolitan centers such as Stockton, it may feel even hotter because of what forecasters call the "urban island heat effect." With dark surfaces such as blacktop and cement conducting heat rapidly, and with hundreds of air conditioners spewing 130-degree air into the environment, your work parking lot can easily feel 10 to 15 degrees warmer than the official temperature, said Basil Newmerzhicky, a forecaster with the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

The result: triple-digit temperatures, starting with a high of 103 degrees today, 102 Friday and in the low 100s through the weekend, according to AccuWeather. It'll be uncomfortable, the source of many complaints around the oft-visited water cooler.

Heat hazards

But it also will be dangerous.

When temperatures reach well into the 100s, the human body can lose its ability to cool itself, health experts say, especially while exercising or at work. While we normally sweat fast enough to cool ourselves outside while staying hydrated enough to stay cool inside, in extreme heat our bodies don't work fast enough, said Yvonne Lopez, director of health services at University of the Pacific's wellness center. "You can't cool yourself down," she said.

The most immediate result is heat exhaustion. You'll sweat profusely, grow dehydrated and tired, get nauseous and weak, and feel irritable, experts say. About then, you'll need to drink a lot of fluids, wet yourself down with a towel, or hop in the pool or shower. And sit down, already. Take a load off.

If you don't, you'll run the risk of suffering a heat stroke. "It can be bad," Lopez said.

Last month, authorities investigating the death of two area men initially attributed their deaths to heat stroke, a far more dangerous and potentially deadly heat-induced injury. An official cause of death has not been determined for the men.

As the core body temperature begins to rise, someone suffering from heat stroke will stop sweating, and their skin will turn dry and irritated, said Heather Marshall, an emergency-room doctor at San Joaquin General Hospital. Heat-stroke patients likely are to become disoriented, their mental status altered, she says.

Though it's difficult to know when heat exhaustion becomes more serious and requires treatment, someone who can no longer keep down fluids should head immediately to the emergency room. You need that fluid, Lopez said. "If it's not there, you're going to be in trouble."

#### Smog harms lungs

There is more trouble lurking in the heat, too. Trouble you often can't see but that can be dangerous and even deadly: pollution.

When temperatures spike near 100 degrees, pollution -- gases such as ozone and particles such as dust and smoke -- are more prevalent and linger near the ground, in the park and on the roads and everywhere. (However, experts say, when temperatures reach extreme triple-digit temperatures like those common during Valley heat waves, that pollution actually pushes high into the atmosphere -- remember, heat rises -- and out of range of our lungs).

Researchers at the University of California, Davis, and other schools around the country are toiling over how these pollutants affect people who are exposed to them.

"It's amazing how little we know," said Anthony Wexler, director of the university's Air Quality Research Center, where dozens of academics study the cause and effects of air pollution.

So far, they know this: It's bad for your lungs.

And it's even worse for children and the elderly.

Children who spend their summers in urban streets and playgrounds are outside so much, running around and breathing in toxins, their still-developing lungs can be permanently altered, Wexler says.

For the elderly and others whose lungs are damaged already, the problem is more immediate.

Heat-induced pollution can speed up any lung afflictions and even cause a sudden death, Wexler said.

Because the effects on children come from slow, everyday exposure, there is little parents can do to protect their children, aside from pushing lawmakers to crack down on pollution. But Wexler suggests elderly people and others who suffer lung ailments simply stay inside on hot and high-pollutant days.

"Stay indoors," he said. "Those people really should be paying more attention" to pollution levels.

#### Protect pets, plants

Staying indoors, of course, can be a lonely and depressing endeavor on a spit-shined summer day. But other experts suggest you shouldn't be alone on those sweltering afternoons, that someone should join you in the cool and dark indoors: your pets.

Like us, dogs and cats are highly susceptible to heat exhaustion. To avoid a trip to the vet, "just bring your pets indoors when it gets that hot," said Patrice Davidson, director of the Delta Humane Society.

If you can't, make sure they have plenty of shade and water, and watch them carefully. If they are panting or if your dog's gums are hot and discolored, hydrate them or take them to the doctor, Davidson said.

"There's no excuse to have them out," she said.

Just like they do on people, hot summer days can take a toll on your garden, your grass or your crops, too. And when the thermometer jumps, plants "can't go in the shade, unlike dogs and us," said Jim Richards, an expert on plant responses to environmental stress at UC Davis.

However, while they would much prefer coastlike weather, in the mid-80s with some cloud cover - - most actually grow slower when it's hotter than 85 degrees -- plants can survive most Valley days without much stress, Richards said. It's only when the leaves reach above 113 degrees that most plants or crops will be damaged severely, he said.

"It's a very sharp threshold," he said. "The difference is huge."

Other than that, on Friday, when it's 102 and you're hotter than a honeymoon hotel, rest assured that your plants will probably be just fine, Richard said, "as long as they have enough water."

[Porterville Recorder editorial:](#)

## Valley must move forward with air quality

A survey last week showed that Valley residents want clean air - but aren't yet willing to do much to get it. The survey by the Public Policy Institute of California indicated that 42 percent of Valley residents rate air pollution as the most serious environmental problem, up from 28 percent in 2000.

Statewide, 47 percent of residents see vehicle emissions as the primary cause. Oddly, less than half of those surveyed seem to be "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about how their own driving contributes to poor air quality.

We have said in this space recently that cleaning the air is a major task and one that will take years to accomplish. But if we continue to sit back, point blame and not take responsibility, this Valley will be in some serious trouble - financially speaking, and perhaps health-wise as well.

If ways aren't found to clean the air, funding for highway projects could be lost. If the Valley loses money because of its air problems, our roads will become even more congested than they are now. Business will suffer, as will our quality of life.

Nobody wants that.

Change is never easy, especially when you are facing an uphill battle, such as improving the Valley's air. It appears that Valley residents are in the second of four predictable phases that people typically go through before they become committed to a course of action.

The first phase is denial, when people refuse to accept the problem at hand. When it comes to air, we've seen many years of denial. But thanks in part to education and communication, people are accepting the fact that we have a problem.

The second stage of change is resistance, when people may acknowledge there's a problem but resist efforts to fix it. We believe this is where the Valley is right now when it comes to air quality.

Yes, people can appreciate the problem before them, but they still are not sure if it's up to them to make a difference.

The third stage, the one we'll get to next, is exploration. This is when we'll start to seriously explore the options that are out there to fix the problem.

Only then can we move into the final stage, commitment. This is when people become believers in solutions to the problem and are ready to move ahead in hopes of achieving a positive outcome.

This, of course, is where we need everyone eventually to be when it comes to air quality. We're a long way from commitment; we're way back in stage two.

Changing perceptions toward air quality is the key to the battle. But it's a fight that has to be won. There's too much at stake.

[Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee editorial:](#)

## The fireplace question

Education is the main tool for reducing urban wood burning.

*(Published Thursday, July 17, 2003, 7:15 AM)*

The Valley's air district board will discuss today -- and perhaps adopt -- a rule on the use of fireplaces. The debate is, among other things, a good example of the complicated nature of the decisions we face in the process of cleaning up our air.

We know that fireplaces contribute heavily to our pollution problems on the colder days of winter, and that's why we support banning them in new homes. Fireplace burning accounts for 20% or more of the particulate matter in urban neighborhoods on winter days. That pollution can trigger asthma and other respiratory diseases.

We also know that newer, cleaner-burning wood stoves and other fireplace equipment don't pollute as badly as the old-fashioned hearth with the logs burning merrily away. Manufactured logs also produce less pollution than their natural counterparts.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District staff proposes to stop all wood burning when the air becomes "unhealthy," defined as reaching a score of 150 on the 300-point scale air regulators use.

But they also suggest eliminating another proposal that would have shut down fireplaces at a lower level -- 100, or "unhealthful for sensitive people" -- unless they employ the newer cleaner-burning equipment.

The manufacturers of that equipment, not surprisingly, would like more people to know about their wares and think the two-tier regulation would help with that. They fear that if the rule simply says "shut them all down" at a certain level, the public will be less inclined to shift to the newer technology. They may have a point.

Air district staffers think the two-tier system is harder to enforce, and they may also have a point.

Seattle uses a two-tier fireplace system, and may offer a reason to choose that path. An air official there said, "It might be a whole lot easier to enforce if we didn't have the two steps. But we wouldn't be able to get our message out as often without the first step. It's a slow education process, but it works."

Given the crucial need for education, that suggests the two-tier approach is the better choice.

And we know about the need for education in these matters. It was just a few days ago that the most recent air quality survey revealed the disconcerting fact that Valley residents correctly finger motor vehicles as the greatest single culprits in our poor air quality, but those same Valley residents don't regard their own driving as a particular problem.

We do indeed have a long way to go.

## **Letters to the Editor, Fresno Bee:**

### **Matter of planning**

By Charles Sasso, Fresno

*(Published Thursday, July 17, 2003, 7:25 AM)*

In regard to "Too many Valley residents miss their own connection to air problems" [story July 8]: If you trace this problem to its roots it leads directly to the desks of the Fresno City Council and Fresno planning department.

Whatever happened to the neighborhood store? I have to drive almost two miles to the nearest mega-supermarket for the smallest thing. Even that would be OK if Fresno made sidewalks mandatory. The only way to walk to the supermarket is next to speeding cars along a curving stretch of Figarden Drive, which has no sidewalks.

Then there is the issue of public transportation. Buses are not the answer. They are slow and pollute the air. Fresno needs light rail/subway-type trains similar to what Los Angeles has built in the last few years. It would be great to be able to take the subway (or monorail) to downtown, Clovis, River Park or Woodward Park.

Also, Fresno planners should require parks with benches near all business centers. This should be mandatory, like parking spaces. I know a lot of people would take their lunches and sit outside

instead of driving somewhere if they had the choice. Even better, allow vendors to serve the business parks.

We drive everywhere because we have to. A fringe benefit of all this is that it would make Fresno a better place to live, thus increasing desirability for businesses to relocate here. More businesses means less unemployment and a better quality of life for all of us.

[Guest opinion piece, The Record:](#)

## **Polluted air knows no political boundaries**

By Michael J. Machado

There are many ways of going forward, President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, but only one way of standing still.

Nowhere is this more true than the Legislature's efforts to find new ways to clean the air in the San Joaquin Valley, which has deteriorated into one of the dirtiest air basins in the nation.

If you have a child with asthma or a parent with respiratory disease, you need no reminder of the health effects of air pollution, not to mention its impact on our quality of life and the regional economy.

The state Legislature responded with many proposals, most of which are opposed by groups wanting things to stay the same.

This is true of my efforts to reform the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board. Senate Bill 999 adds four members to the district board: one appointed by the Assembly, one by the Senate and two by the governor, one of which must be a physician.

All those appointed must be residents of the district, have a demonstrated interest in air quality and understand the public's needs regarding air pollution.

Many local agencies and industries oppose the bill, arguing that a proposal allowing anyone other than local elected officials on the board dilutes local control.

They assert that local control is the only way and the state should leave them alone, despite the fact the Valley exceeds eight-hour ozone standards more often than the Los Angeles basin.

Local control is important. In many cases, elected representatives closest to the people are the best evaluators of decisions that impact the lives of families and businesses.

Local officials make decisions on land use, police and fire services and other issues that have a direct impact on their constituents' lives.

However, air quality isn't a local issue, because pollution doesn't care what city or county it's in. Bad air from the Valley seeps into the Sierra forests and damages other downwind natural and environmental resources.

With each district board member elected by and accountable only to his or her constituents, who on the board is looking out for the entire region? How is the public interest as a whole represented?

Expertise also is important. The district board oversees complex air-quality issues and should have a physician to analyze a proposal's effects on respiratory health, as well as other individuals with expertise or interest in air-quality issues to represent the public.

The district board's debate and decisions certainly would benefit from more diverse voices and viewpoints. With additional know-how and a broader perspective, the district board might adopt more innovative measures.

Unfortunately, opponents will continue to fight reforms, because they believe local control is more important, that sitting still is better than any way of going forward.

Who wants cleaner air, anyway?

Machado, D-Linden, is in his first term in the California Senate. He represents the 5th District.

[Letters to the Editor, The Record:](#)

## **It's a breath of not-so-fresh air parallel tracks**

California regulators and lawmakers are trying to clean up the state's dirty air.

Californians have reason to be skeptical, but the struggle is necessary and worthwhile.

In Sacramento, state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Fresno, has proposed a pair of bills that have run into a rural caucus wall that crosses political party lines.

His bills, SB700 and SB707, attack toxic emissions down on the farm. They would require machinery/generator operating permits as well as new air-pollution restrictions on dairies, feed lots and commercial animal operations.

They've been criticized by two Assembly members -- Republican Dave Cogdill of Modesto and Democrat Barbara Matthews of Tracy -- who are doing what lawmakers do: looking out for their constituencies.

The dispute has been jurisdictional. The effect has been delay.

On Tuesday, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals weighed in, denying a California Farm Bureau petition that sought to delay implementation of tougher Environmental Protection Agency rules that remove longstanding air-pollution exemptions granted to the agriculture industry.

No matter how these bills and judicial rulings turn out, the ag community must join all Californians in seeking real, doable solutions to the problems of air pollution. Like most state residents in a recent poll, we don't believe farm activities contribute in a big way to air pollution.

That doesn't get farmers off the hook.

While drama over Florez's bills unfolds in the Legislature, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the California Air Resources Board late last month approved a blueprint for cleaner air.

A massive air-pollution control plan, it's now in the hands of the EPA. If the U.S. agency doesn't approve the blueprint, federal highway funds are jeopardized.

Environmentalists, health organizations and others have criticized the 1,000-page plan as being too easy on compliance and too rushed. They've threatened to sue.

One of its most controversial components, wintertime use of wood-burning stoves in urban areas, comes up today when the air-pollution board considers new restrictions.

Though the overall blueprint has been approved, implementation rules still are under discussion.

A week ago, the Field Poll revealed that air pollution was the top environmental concern of most Californians. The highest level of awareness is in the Valley. The same survey showed we're all willing to point somewhere, anywhere, but in our own direction.

Vehicle emissions still will spew poison until we change. It will take pressure from us for hybrid cars, public transportation and cleaner fuels to make a lasting difference.

Until we're willing to make personal sacrifices, these other solutions only will thin the smog, not clean it.