

[Friday, June 4, 2004, Bakersfield Californian, Column](#)

## **Want to save your green? Mow clean**

**By ROBERT PRICE, Californian staff columnist**

The valley air district, ever vigilant in its efforts to clean up America's second-worst basin of air, has rolled out another rebate program for lung-friendly lawn mowers.

The program, which starts Saturday and concludes on June 8, offers discounts of up to \$88 on electric mowers and up to \$45 on rotary push mowers.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District cares because gasoline-powered mowers belch out hydrocarbons and other smog precursors at a breathtaking rate.

In fact, according to a 2003 study by Los Angeles' South Coast Air Quality Management District, a typical gas mower produces in an hour what a newer passenger car might spew over 340 miles.

The valley air district's three regional offices have already distributed about 600 of 800 available rebate certificates, so hurry if you're interested. (Oddly, the Bakersfield office has handed out only 10 percent of the total rebates, far below its valleywide, per-capita share.)

The program is a good idea, but I immediately see some drawbacks.

First, these are corded electric mowers, which, if you're like me, means you'll cut your cord in half every three or four times you fire up. It would make sense to also offer a battery-powered version, even at two or three times the price of the corded models. The South Coast air district is doing just that this spring in its gas-mower-swap program.

A bigger deal: If air districts really want to make a dent in mower pollution, they ought to start laying the groundwork to get these battery-powered babies into the hands of professional gardeners, of which Kern County has untold hundreds. (Untold because nobody knows the true number, and although cities such as Bakersfield require mow-folk to get business licenses, county government, which oversees unincorporated areas, does not.)

It can't happen, of course, until mower manufacturers take some giant steps. Battery-powered mowers can't hold their charges for more than a few hours.

Ten-hour models are technologically doable and, yes, would be capable of cutting the thick, fibrous hybrid bermuda so common around here. But in today's environment, they would be too heavy and expensive to be commercially viable -- a problem not unlike the one facing the electric-car industry.

"There just isn't the demand" for battery-powered mowers, said Steve Gladstone, product development manager for Vermont-based Neuton Lawn Mowers. "The demand (for hybrid electric cars) is being driven by government mandate. You need that compelling application (to push battery technology forward) and right now, that compelling application is hybrid cars."

Public underwriting of a mass rollout of commercial-grade electric mowers would be wildly expensive. And laying the cost at the feet of the local lawn-care industry would force many self-employed gardeners -- probably the vast majority of all mow-folk -- out of business.

But if air districts are serious about cleaning our air, maybe they ought to start looking at lawn-care services. Somehow, some way, some day.

For details on the local rebate program, visit [valleyair.org](http://valleyair.org) or call 326-6900. And if you think next year's program ought to offer a battery-powered model, say so.

"If that's the only thing that's keeping people from getting an electric, we need to know," says the valley air district's Brenda Turner.

[Wednesday, June 2, 2004, Fresno Business Journal](#)

## **Farmers required to lower dust levels**

By Chuck Harvey

Special to The (Fresno) Business Journal

The Business Journal - Valley farmer Steve Jackson has been oiling down his roads and adding rocks on more heavily used routes to reduce dust kicked up from trucks traveling to and from his Kettleman City fruit orchards.

Tipton Cotton, corn and alfalfa grower Charlie Pitigliano has purchased two water trucks to keep dust down on his roads. He is also using wider harrow equipment so his tractors can prepare fields with fewer passes.

Large farm operations have until July 1 to choose and implement plans to reduce dust on large farms, dairies and ranches. Farmers must file an application for review of their plans with the San Joaquin Air Pollution District by Dec. 31 of this year.

The San Joaquin Air Pollution Control board approved Rule 4550, known as Conservation Management Practices, at the board's May 20 meeting. The rule allows farmers and ranchers to select two conservation management practices from among options approved by the district.

Dust control plans are divided into farms growing crops, poultry operations, dairy farms, and feedlots. Farmers can choose plans to reduce or eliminate the need to disturb the soil or manure, protect soil from wind erosion, reduce dust on unpaved roads and parking areas and develop alternates to burning waste materials.

Practices include low-till farming, improving soil with amendments that will make the soil less powdery and apt to create dust, and keeping dirt roads watered down. Using trees as wind breaks can help protect the soil from wind erosion.

Jackson said low-till farming is already common in fruit orchards. The rows between the trees are usually cleared with a disc the first two years of tree growth. After that the rows are left dormant, Jackson said.

Dave Mitchell, planning manager for the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District, said that through dust control measures and reductions in waste burning, the district determined it can cut Valley pollution by 23 percent by 2010.

The plan is to reduce PM 10 emissions, which are particles measuring 10 microns or smaller. That makes the particles about one-seventh the width of a human hair.

Besides adding to pollution, the small particles have been shown to cause health problems in people who breathe them. The particles can lodge deep in the lungs, leading to serious health problems.

Mitchell said the dust control rule should remove on average about 34 tons of PM 10 particles each day.

Mitchell added that dust contributes to air pollution and the central San Joaquin Valley has some of the dirtiest air in the nation. It has more days of high smog levels than the Los Angeles basin, he said.

Rule 4550 is a component of the PM 10 plan passed by the board and recently approved by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The rule applies to agricultural field operations of 100 or more contiguous acres, and larger cattle ranches.

In all, about 8,000 farms in the eight-county district could be subject to the rule.

Farmers subject to dust control plans will pay a fee to cover the cost of having their dust control plans reviewed by the district. Fees will range from \$62.75 to \$251 for animal feed producers and from \$120 to \$550 for all other kinds of farmers.

David Crow, air pollution control officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said the district worked with farmers to iron out its dust control rule. "We've spent a lot of time working with the ag community to ensure that the proposed management practices are feasible and effective," Crow said.

To help farmers develop plans, the California Farm Bureau in Sacramento has scheduled a series of workshops. In Fresno County, a workshop is scheduled for 4 p.m. June 9 in the Fresno County Farm Bureau at 1274 W. Hedges in Fresno.

In Kings County, a workshop will be held at 8 a.m. June 10 at the Kings County District Fairgrounds in Hanford. A dairy-only workshop is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. June 10 in the University of California Cooperative Extension office, 680 N. Campus Drive in Hanford.

In Madera County, a workshop is set for 8 a.m. June 2 in the Madera Fairgrounds' Van Alan Hall. In Tulare County, a workshop is scheduled for 8 a.m. June 1 in the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's office at 4437 Laspina St. in Tulare, and at 4 p.m. June 1 in the Tulare County Farm Bureau building at 737 N. Ben Maddox Way in Visalia.

### **Smoke management gives farmers flexibility**

By Chuck Harvey

Special to The (Fresno) Business Journal

The Business Journal - The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has developed a new smoke management program that is designed to give farmers more flexibility in scheduling burns, while reducing the level of harmful smoke in the Valley's urban areas.

The system uses interactive voice recognition technology and meteorological data to determine if burning will be allowed and to what extent. Under the new program, the air basin is divided into more than 100 zones.

District staff monitor localized weather conditions to determine how many emissions will be allocated to each zone. An advanced computer program monitors emissions and determines when the limit for emissions has been reached in each zone.

In that way, a "no burn" day or "limited burn" day for one area would not necessarily translate into the same status for another area within the Central Valley.

"It is something the Farm Bureau is in support of," said Ryan Bertao, Kings County Farm Bureau executive director. "It is a step in the right direction."

Under the new plan, farmers will not have to wait for a burn day in an air basin that stretches for hundreds of miles, Bertao said. Instead, burns will be determined on conditions in smaller areas where air quality may be acceptable for burning, he said.

The plan will only be needed during the current decade. Crop waste burning, other than burning of diseased plants, will be phased out starting in 2005 and concluding in 2010.

But district officials expect the new system to pay off-even in the short term-by reducing air pollution and providing a better system for scheduling burns. Stagnant air would prevent burns in a particular area.

"With the new zones, you will have an accurate distribution of burns," said Dave Mitchell, planning manager for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District.

Under the old system, the Air Pollution Control District determined burn and non-burn days for each of three large regions comprising the Valley air basin. The north and south San Joaquin Valleys comprised two of the zones.

The other was in areas above 3,000 feet in elevation.

Heaviest burning is in the fall harvest season, Mitchell said. Many burns are also requested in the early winter when fruit trees are being pruned.

The new plan is designed to reduce public exposure to smoke while giving farmers and land managers more flexibility in burning wastes. With the new system, farmers will be able to request burn authorization from the district as early as 8 p.m. the day before their planned burn by contacting the automated voice response system or by logging onto the district's Web site at <http://www.valleyair.org>

They can also talk to an operator from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. seven days a week.

Farmers who are unable to burn because the limit on emissions has been reached for that day will be placed on a priority list for the next burn allocation day in that zone. The district will then contact the farmer the day before the authorized burn.

The total burns allowed on a particular day will be based on estimated emissions for that day and not on a set number of burns, Mitchell said.

[Wednesday, June 2, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle](#)

### **Air pollution a risk in heart disease Warning on exercising outdoors when particulate count is high**

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer

The American Heart Association, an influential guide for physicians and the public on preventing heart disease, issued its first warning Wednesday that air pollution contributes to cardiovascular disease.

People with heart or lung disease should avoid exercising outdoors during episodes of polluted air, the association cautions.

Adding air pollution as a risk factor -- albeit a less potent risk factor than cigarette smoking or physical inactivity -- represents a shift for the association, which until now had remained unconvinced that bad air was linked to heart disease.

But a growing body of evidence over the past decade indicates that air pollution, particularly fine particles, can trigger strokes and heart attacks, according to a study published in the June 1 issue of the journal *Circulation* by the association's committee of researchers and clinicians.

"Although the relative risk of air pollution for any one individual is small when compared to the major traditional risk factors of high blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, there's clearly enough evidence to support the position that air pollution contributes to cardiovascular risk," said lead author Dr. Robert Brook, a vascular specialist in the University of Michigan's division of cardiovascular medicine.

"When the risk is applied to tens of millions of people who are exposed involuntarily throughout a lifetime, it becomes a serious problem," Brook said.

Air pollution was linked to a greater number of deaths from heart disease than from respiratory disease, according to the heart association's review of nearly 200 published studies.

The review also found that heart risks from air pollution may approach those of secondhand smoke, the single largest contributor to indoor air pollution. Secondhand smoke from one cigarette a day accelerates the progression of hardening of the arteries, studies have found.

Particulate pollution comes from vehicle emissions, tire fragments, road dust, power generation and industrial combustion, smelting and other metal processing, construction and demolition, wood burning, windblown soil, pollens, molds and forest fires.

The association is recommending that doctors advise sensitive patients about reducing the risk of exposure to air pollution.

It recommends that people check their local air quality through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index. Daily information on particles and smog is available every day for 150 cities, including from the Bay Area air monitors, at [www.epa.gov/airnow](http://www.epa.gov/airnow) <<http://www.epa.gov/airnow>>.

Here are two of the most important studies:

-- Earlier this year, Brigham Young University researcher Dr. C. Arden Pope III and others published a study in *Circulation* examining data from 500,000 residents of 146 metropolitan areas over 16 years showing a 12 percent increase in cardiovascular deaths related to long-term exposure to fine particles.

They found an 18 percent increase in heart attack deaths for every additional 10 micrograms of 2.5 micron particles per cubic meter of air. (Three microns is less than one-thousandth thickness of the shaft of a paperclip.)

For comparison, a clean city such as Vancouver averages 5 micrograms of fine particles per cubic meter of air while a dirty city such as Mexico City averages 30 micrograms of fine particles per cubic meter of air.

-- Based on data from 90 of the largest U.S. cities, Johns Hopkins University researcher Jonathan Samet and others reported in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2000 that all deaths and deaths from heart or lung disease increased in the short term by 0.21 percent and 0.31 percent, respectively, for each 10 micrograms per cubic meter of air increase of 10- micron particles over 24 hours.

More research is needed on how pollutants can trigger heart problems, the study said. Scientists believe that air pollution may disrupt the body's functions at the cellular level.

"When you breathe air, little engines in your cells produce byproducts called 'reactive oxygen species,' which can induce inflammation and damage DNA," said Dr. Ira Tager, professor of epidemiology at the UC Berkeley School of Public Health and an author of the new report.

Normally, the body keeps these byproducts from causing too much damage. However, particulate pollution can produce these same substances, adding a burden that can overwhelm the natural defenses, said Tager. The increased amount of these substances may set off a series of biological responses associated with a higher cardiovascular death risk, including alteration in heart variability and allergic and nonallergic inflammation, which affects clotting.

The body's defenses, he said, can be further depleted by such factors as diet, genetic constitution and chronic diseases, he said.

[Thursday, June 3, 2004, Stockton Record, Letters to the editor](#)

### **Farm practices sowing doubts**

I can't believe what farmers are asking for.

They want the right to be protected against practices that are hazardous and harmful (poisoning field workers and neighbors) by calling them standard practices.

In San Joaquin County, when there's no new house involved, farmers aren't required to familiarize buyers with their practices. So a purchaser unfamiliar with low-class operations, loud, clangy equipment next to the house at night and the dumping of pesticides from airplanes, isn't uncommon in California.

Farmers selling property should be required to tell buyers what goes on to make it a fair proposal. This should be true of new or existing housing. Farmers avoid truth about it when selling, then claim their "right to farm" as a defense.

The Record stated there were 274 confirmed pesticide poisonings in 1999-2000 in San Joaquin County, and only four violations were issued.

Right-to-farm laws should be made stricter on farmers who profit from their fields -- not their neighbors, who end up breathing pesticides, [diesel fumes](#), [dust and smoggy air](#).

Farmers want to make farming practices exempt from being a nuisance. Who decides what's legal and normal? Farmers?

This blanket protection is wrong. Farmers should be required to treat neighbors the way they'd insist on being treated themselves.

If farmers can't handle the business without taking advantage of buyers, there's no reason to protect them.

By Charly Lancaster  
Stockton

### **Don't 'red tape' agriculture**

This is in response to The Record story on May 26 ("Deadline looms as farmers gather for first air-pollution-control workshop").

Our great agricultural industry in San Joaquin County, which provides much-needed jobs to local families, is being overcome by excessive environmental regulations being imposed upon farmers by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

A more reasonable approach should be explored that provides more flexibility and less red tape to help our essential agricultural industry remain a viable economic force.

By Arthur Murrillo  
Stockton

[Wednesday, June 2, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle, Letters to the Editor](#)

### **Indoor air pollution is of concern to many**

Editor -- (Re: "Home is where the hazard is," May 19): Amazing piece! The depth of (Jane Kay's) work is evident in today's article.

Brava.

JEANNE RIZZO, R.N.  
Executive director  
The Breast Cancer Fund  
San Francisco

Editor -- Everyone in our office was raving about the story on hazards in the home. Thanks for doing such a comprehensive and thorough job. We're also grateful that the reporter was able to mention the cosmetics and biomonitoring legislation.

ERIN MALEC  
Communications manager  
The Breast Cancer Fund

Editor -- Just wanted to send a quick note congratulating Jane Kay on the terrific reporting in her piece on indoor air pollutants. First-rate coverage and a great read.

KEN COOK  
President, Environmental  
Working Group  
Washington, D.C.

Editor -- The refusal to fully disclose the contents and potential effects of marketed products is contrary to the Bill of Rights. I have found the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness quite difficult while lugging a portable oxygen tank and functioning with a reduced IQ level from absorption of neurotoxic pesticides sprayed in a school where I taught in 1999. Potential adverse effects for "revealed" ingredients are delineated in product MSDS sheets. But how can doctors diagnose such effects while landlords and employers have no legal duty to warn about the impending use of toxic materials in their "fiefdoms"? Revelations are required only upon request by individuals after exposure.

In my case, toxicological testing confirmed what authorities had refused to disclose. I have since moved out of several apartments when severe asthma and other symptoms indicated possible environmental causation. Environmental testing revealed significant levels of contaminants in each case: methylene chloride; insecticides cypermethrin, dursban and dichlorvos; petrochemical hydrocarbon from inadequately combusted fuel oil. Other tenants occupied those residences before and after my tenancy -- but at what cost?

Only full disclosure of product ingredients (required in Europe), with warnings prior to use is acceptable. For now, we must test our own homes and offices to protect our health and intellectual capacities.

BARBARA RUBIN  
Cos Cob, Conn.

Editor -- People today desperately need to be educated; this is a great article, great information!  
Give us more.

BILL CALLAHAN  
Tamalpais NatureWorks  
San Rafael

Editor -- That was a remarkable pair of articles on indoor air pollution. One of the best I've seen written anywhere. I happened to be speaking at an all-day meeting on learning/developmental disabilities and environmental exposures, which forced me off the Internet before The Chronicle was posted. Hence, Environmental Health News didn't carry your stories. They're now up ([www.environmentalhealthnews.org](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org) <<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org>>; search on "Jane Kay" in the archives). You might be interested in the new searchable archives. There's nothing else like it anywhere on the Web.

PETE MYERS  
Environmental  
Health Sciences  
Charlottesville, Va.

Editor -- I thought Jane Kay's series of articles on indoor air pollution were outstanding. As her articles always are, today's series is quite informative, exceptionally written and very thought-provoking.

ANGELA BLANCHETTE  
Cal/EPA, California  
Department of Toxic Substances  
Control, Berkeley

Editor -- Our company, Healthy Home Designs, is devoted to educating people about the dangers posed by many building materials in use today and to enabling them to build or remodel using the best nontoxic alternatives, at no additional cost.

After seven months of research and three months of writing, we are about to publish a book called the "Healthy Construction Guidelines." The guidelines will enable homeowners and builders to remodel (or construct) their homes using the highest-quality and most durable nontoxic materials available. Formatted to match the Construction Specifications Institute, guidelines, it explains the health concerns inherent in most conventional building materials, identifies where they are used in the construction process, recommends the very best nontoxic alternatives available today, provides the contact information for all the manufacturers and distributors of these products and explains special healthy building techniques.

I believe these guidelines are the answer to two questions posed in your article: "So what is a consumer to do?" and "How does the new parent know what kind of products to buy when they prepare the new baby's room?" Consumers have almost no ability to know the chemical composition of very common products that are ubiquitous in our society."

Our primary business focus is on enabling people to build a healthy home from the ground up, but these guidelines have given us a way to help the much larger group of people who are remodeling or adding on. Our site is [www.healthyhomedesigns.com](http://www.healthyhomedesigns.com) <<http://www.healthyhomedesigns.com>>.

THOMAS ROEDOC  
President  
Healthy Home Designs  
Sausalito

Editor -- I became aware of chemical hazards in 1976 when I found out I was allergic to chlorine. Dr. Iris Bell did a study at Stanford with the Sleep Disorders Center in 1975 to try to find out if food was affecting our narcolepsy symptoms. I worked with her for three months. She detected my food allergies and sent my data to Dr. Clyde Hawley, clinical ecologist in Livermore, for testing. I have central nervous system chemical and food allergies. Chlorine made me have cataplexy. The elimination diet caused three of my serious narcolepsy symptoms to go away, and they have been gone for 27 years now. I had had cataplexy for 20 years. Iris is still working on detecting environmental and health problems to the tissues and has published many studies over the years. The other item that was so bad for me was tyramine in preserved proteins, that is hot dogs, salami and worst of all, cheese. It put me in a fog.

So I have been aware of chemicals since then, but I am worried about people like my daughter, who uses fake nails with these chemicals, and all kinds of creams. There are millions like her who never give a thought about these issues, but I worry they will cause cancer. I told my neighbors not to have the house sprayed for ants, when they had a toddler.

MARLENE JUSCEN-LONG  
Burlingame

Editor -- I tried to stop breathing while at home, but this prompted a trip to my primary care physician who advised that this is definitely contraindicated, not at all a good thing to do. I then tried holding my nose, but realized that all those bad things listed in your article were still getting into my lungs through my mouth and therefore (into) my body. Can you advise?

MARC FELDMAN  
Oakland