

As temperature increases, smog apt to follow When mercury rises past 100 degrees, the Valley can become a caldron of bad air.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee

(Updated Thursday, July 22, 2004, 6:42 AM)

Stifling smog and 100-degree heat may have been on hiatus for a while in the San Joaquin Valley, but don't cancel your vacation plans at the coast yet.

Temperatures, which this month have mostly flirted with triple digits, are forecast to climb past 100 degrees this weekend. And bad air is bound to follow, air quality officials say.

"Air quality has been pretty good so far this summer, but it will probably change by Sunday," said supervising meteorologist Evan Shipp at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The National Weather Service predicted Wednesday that high temperatures will hover around 100 degrees for the next few days in Fresno, possibly climbing to 102 Sunday and Monday.

Fresno's high Wednesday was 101, and forecasters called for 104 today.

Through Tuesday, the mercury had hit 100 only five times this year in Fresno, compared to 23 times in the same period last year. Now it appears the area could experience the season's first significant run of 100-degree days.

When temperatures rise past 100, the Valley can become a caldron of bad air. Ozone, the corrosive main ingredient in smog, forms as sunlight and heat cook chemicals coming from vehicles, boilers and other sources.

But breezy, sub-100-degree days this year disrupted smog formation and prevented many violations of the federal health standard. At this point last summer, the Valley had 15 violations of the one-hour or peak standard. This summer, monitors have detected only one.

"We've had a few more storm systems this year in the Pacific Northwest that have had an effect here," said meteorologist Daniel Harty with the Weather Service in Hanford. "The trajectory of the upper-level storms has made a little difference here." Shipp said he couldn't answer whether recent smog-reduction rules and other efforts made a difference without more analysis at the end of the smog season. But he said much of the improvement in June and July is probably linked to the weather.

Still, the air hasn't been entirely clean. Smog forms when temperatures are in the 90s, and the Valley's bowl tends to hold the pollution.

The Valley now has 44 violations of the more stringent, daylong smog standard -- more than any other place in the country. The Los Angeles area, which has five times as many people as the Valley, has 39 violations.

The daylong violations mean that residents are consistently exposed to unsafe levels of ozone, which damages human lungs, eyes and skin. Ozone can trigger asthma or bronchitis.

Shipp said the worst of the smog season is yet to come. The afternoon breezes often drop and smog builds for days in the atmosphere, creating the perfect setting for violations.

On such bad-air days, children, the elderly and those with lung problems should take refuge indoors during afternoon hours until about 6 p.m., officials recommend. The indoor air generally is much better than the ozone-laden air outside.

"Ozone is not being created in your house," Shipp said. "If it gets in somehow from the outside, it is being destroyed by your air-conditioning filter or it oxidizes and goes away when it comes in contact with something."

Environment ranks high among Californians' concerns, poll finds

Terence Chea, Associated Press Writer

Thursday, July 22, 2004

Published in the SF Chronicle, Modesto Bee and other regional newspapers

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) -- Worried about air pollution and related health problems, most Californians want lawmakers to make protecting the environment a top priority, even if it hinders economic growth, according to a poll released Thursday.

The poll by the Public Policy Institute of California found wide support across racial, ethnic, regional and political lines for environmental protection programs to reduce air pollution, reduce auto emissions and develop alternative energy sources.

"As our state becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, concerns about environmental issues are being seen across a broad spectrum of the population," Mark Baldassare, the San Francisco-based institute's survey director, said in an interview.

The poll, which surveyed 2,505 residents in five languages, found that 54 percent of likely voters believe the environment should be a top policy priority, even at the expense of the economy. Fifty-five percent want funding for environmental protection programs to remain at current levels.

Among environmental issues, Californians ranked air pollution as their No. 1 concern, with 35 percent saying it was a big problem in their region and 59 percent saying it posed "at least a somewhat serious threat to themselves or their families," according to the poll.

Blacks and Latinos were most likely to see air pollution as a serious threat. Concern about it was highest among residents of the Central Valley and the Los Angeles County, where smog remains a major complaint.

Air quality worries may be linked to growing public support for laws and programs to reduce pollution. The poll found that 81 percent of residents support requiring automakers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in new cars by 2009. About 66 percent back a \$6 increase in vehicle license fees to pay for cleaner engines on older diesel vehicles.

The poll also found that 63 percent of residents would seriously consider buying or leasing a hybrid vehicle, which runs on both gas and electricity, because of rising fuel prices. About two-thirds favor allowing hybrid cars in car pool lanes when driven alone.

Californians support Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposals to encourage development of alternative energy sources such as hydrogen fuel cells. But despite interest in his programs, only 37 percent of residents approved -- while 27 percent disapproved -- of the governor's handling of environmental issues, even though he enjoys a 64 percent approval rating among likely voters.

"They just don't see him as showing leadership on environmental issues at this point, even though they like some of his proposals and ideas," Baldassare said.

Terry Tamminen, secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, said the poll validates Gov. Schwarzenegger's strong emphasis on environmental issues, pointing out that more Californians approve than disapprove of the governor's handling of the environment.

"The governor knows the environment has to be a very high priority," Tamminen said. "This is a case where we finally have a governor who's leading and understands the needs of the state."

The survey found Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry holding a sizable advantage over President Bush on environmental issues. About 56 percent of likely voters said they trusted Kerry on the environment, while only 32 percent said they approved of Bush's handling of environmental issues.

More than 80 percent of likely voters said a candidate's environmental positions were at least somewhat important to them in deciding for whom to vote, and 37 percent said it was very important.

Some environmentalists said the poll's findings should remind state politicians about how strongly Californians feel about the environment.

"The one big takeaway for lawmakers right now, especially during budget negotiations, is that voters and Californians really care about environmental protection," said Craig Noble, a spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "They want them to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the environment in general."

Poll: Bad air a worry in Valley

By Will Shuck and David Siders

Thursday, July 22, 2004, Stockton Record

Central Valley residents are just as likely to worry about bad air as are people who live in legendarily smoggy Los Angeles, according to a statewide poll released today.

Over the past four years, Valley dwellers have become increasingly concerned about air pollution and its effects on their health and the health of their children. Back in 2000, only 28 percent of Central Valley residents considered the issue a big problem. Today, it's almost half.

This is the first year since the nonprofit Public Policy Institute of California began tracking opinions that people in the Valley mirrored the thinking of those in Los Angeles.

The poll released today shows that nearly 47 percent of Valley residents say air pollution is a big problem, the same percentage among those who live in Los Angeles, according to a survey by the nonprofit Public Policy Institute of California.

Coastal residents are much less likely to be worried about the air, with only 24 percent of Bay Area residents; and 26 percent of people in Orange County and San Diego deeming smog a big problem.

Even people in the Inland Empire, the quickly developing desert region east of Los Angeles, are less likely than Valley residents to be concerned about the air they breathe. Among people there, 34 percent labeled bad air a big problem.

Central Valley residents were also among the most pessimistic about the likelihood they will breath cleaner air in 20 years - 27 percent said they had "hardly any" optimism that air will improve in that time. In Los Angeles only 25 percent shared that gloomy outlook.

And nearly half of Valley residents said they'd put their money where their lungs are in search of clean air.

Asked if they would "seriously consider purchasing or leasing a vehicle powered by a hybrid gas and electric engine," nearly half (48 percent) said they would, even if it cost them more than a standard vehicle.

Another 15 percent said they would if the price were the same as a conventional auto, and 25 percent said they would not regardless of price.

The Record on Wednesday spoke with a number of San Joaquin County residents who say, clean air or not, they need their gas-guzzling SUVs.

Dan and Andrea Logan of Stockton said they care about air quality, but that it is not on their minds when they bring their three children to the mall for lunch.

The 2000 Ford Expedition the family drives pollutes no more than other cars, said Andrea Logan, 29.

Besides, they need the room for themselves and for a stroller, diapers, bags and coolers, she said.

"I would never go back to a car," she said.

Across town at Victory Park, Kajuana Brintley, 26, is so concerned about the air that she listens to air-quality reports in the morning and shuts the windows at night.

Brintley, a nursing student at San Joaquin Delta College, said she has developed allergies since moving from the Bay Area five or six years ago.

Her children, 4- and 7-years-old, wheeze in the Valley air, she said.

Brintley drives a 1995 Pontiac Grand Am and opines freely about gas-guzzlers.

"I want an SUV so bad," she said.

She said rising gasoline prices are troubling, but that SUVs are cooler than minivans and that the high seats in an SUV would afford her children a better look out the window.

Valley air growing concern among residents

Poll: Level of anxiety rising fastest in Valley

By Jake Henshaw, Sacramento Bureau

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, July 22, 2004

SACRAMENTO -- Anxiety about air pollution grew more in the Central Valley than any other region of the state in the past four years, followed by the Inland Empire, according to a new poll to be released.

Forty-seven percent of Central Valley residents recently told polltakers that air pollution is a big problem, up from 28 percent in June 2000. The Valley now equals Los Angeles in the level of concern.

In the Inland Empire counties of Riverside and San Bernardino, 38 percent of the residents said air pollution is a big problem, up from 28 percent in June 2000.

The 19 percent point jump in the Central Valley and the 10-point increase in the Inland Empire were the only double-digit increases in the past four years in the five regions surveyed by the Public Policy Institute of California.

Los Angeles County and the Orange and San Diego county regions saw 7 percent and 6 percent increases, respectively, while the San Francisco Bay Area actually saw a 2-percent drop in major concern.

But Los Angeles County residents continued to register the greatest collective concern. Residents who said air pollution was a 'big problem' or 'somewhat of a problem' totaled 88 percent.

The comparable numbers were 81 percent in the Central Valley and 73 percent in the Inland Empire.

In all regions surveyed, air pollution was by far the top environmental issue, drawing double-digit concern in all regions compared to mostly single-digit anxiety for water pollution, water supply growth and overpopulation and pollution in general.

Overall, 55 percent of residents surveyed statewide said the environment should be a priority even at the expense of curbing economic growth, compared to 29 percent who would give economic growth top billing.

Comparably, the survey found that 54 percent of residents statewide want the state to fund environmental programs even if it means less for other state initiatives.

Regionally, 48 percent of Central Valley residents said they would seriously consider making their next car one with a hybrid gas and electric engine even if it costs more than a conventional car.

In the Inland Empire, 44 percent said they seriously would consider such a purchase or lease.

As an alternative to automobile transportation, the survey also questioned residents on support for a \$9.95 billion bond to help begin construction of a high-speed train that would carry passengers at speeds of more than 200 mph through the Central Valley between northern and southern California.

Fifty-nine percent of likely Central Valley voters said they would vote for the bond, which is scheduled for the November 2006 ballot, and 56 percent of Inland Empire residents favored it.

The rail bond drew 57 percent support statewide, with the highest backing in the San Francisco area at 61 percent.

Likely voters statewide also said they would support a clean air bond under debate in the Capitol by 59 percent if it makes it to the ballot, with 55 percent of Central Valley residents favoring it and 56 percent of Inland Empire residents backing it.

PPIC polltakers contacted 2,505 residents between June 30 and July 14 in the survey that has a 2 percent margin of error statewide.

Poll says foul air, gasoline prices grab Californians Fuel-efficient cars, rules to battle smog even top concerns about job growth

By Carl T. Hall

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, July 22, 2004

Concerns about air pollution and higher gas prices are turning Californians greener than ever during this election season, a new survey shows.

A statewide telephone poll of 2,505 California adults by the nonprofit Public Policy Institute of California found air quality tops the list of environmental issues in the minds of most Californians - far ahead of such other possibilities as "pollution in general," water pollution and runaway population growth.

The survey was conducted during the first two weeks of July; it has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points. People taking the survey questioned respondents in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean or Vietnamese.

Results showed a surprisingly high interest in fuel-efficient cars, gas- electric hybrid vehicles and pollution-fighting regulations -- even at the expense of job growth.

Mark Baldassare, director of the San Francisco institute, said Californians appeared to be convinced that higher gas prices were here to stay, driving state residents toward "some new ways of thinking" about the environment and energy matters.

"The big change is in the scope of ideas people are now willing to consider," he said. "And now they say they are willing to make changes even if it's going to cost them more to do so."

Despite the state's well-publicized fiscal woes, a clear majority -- about 54 percent -- of California's voting-age residents endorsed the notion that the state should "continue to fund environmental programs at the current level, even if it means less funds for other programs."

A weak economy and clouded state budget picture have had some impact, however, on attitudes. A year ago, 65 percent of California adults said that environment should be given top priority, compared with 55 percent in July 2004.

But increasingly, environmentalists are pushing policies they claim can clear the air without wrecking job creation, so the historic conflict between those two goals may be less pronounced in the minds of many people.

"The California public has shown, year after year, very strong support for environmental causes," said Kate Larsen, policy associate for the Oakland-based environmental group Environmental Defense. "One thing we're finding now is it isn't an either-or question anymore of environment vs. economic growth."

She cited passage in 2002 of state legislation that gives automakers until 2014 to meet new greenhouse-gas emission standards for new cars sold in the state. Besides their potential benefit

for the environment, such vehicles are increasingly seen as money-savers, despite higher sticker prices.

That is reflected in the new survey by strong support -- 73 percent -- for regulations forcing carmakers to improve fuel efficiency. Eighty-one percent said they would favor a stricter proposed state law that would lower greenhouse-gas emissions -- carbon dioxide and other compounds that contribute to global warming -- within five years.

The survey also found hints of marked pessimism about fuel price trends in the state.

Fifty-six percent of adult Californians said they believed the higher gas prices of early July represented "a permanent change," while just 39 percent called it a "temporary fluctuation."

Prices have edged lower the past few days, but Baldassare said the survey results suggested Californians would perceive this as short-lived relief.

"More than half of Californians are saying that rising cost of gasoline is really a permanent fixture in our economy now," he said.

That, combined with the sensitivity to the clean-air issue, has led Californians to "think differently about the type of vehicles they drive and what kind of power they want to have available," Baldassare added.

Two-thirds of the survey respondents said they had "seriously considered" getting a more fuel-efficient car, while nearly half said they would consider making their next car a hybrid even if it cost more than a gas-only vehicle.

On environmental matters, at least, the survey also showed a clear preference for Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry over President Bush, whose approval ratings in the state have declined markedly since a year ago, sliding from 63 percent in the summer of 2003 to 40 percent this July.

Asked who they would vote for if the election were held today, 49 percent chose Kerry, 38 percent favored Bush, and 5 percent were for independent Ralph Nader. The rest cited other candidates or said they didn't know.

Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger drew relatively high marks, although his job-approval ratings in early July -- 57 percent of all California adults, 64 percent of likely voters -- were down a bit since the last such survey in May, when 64 percent of Californians and 69 percent of likely voters approved of the way he has been doing his job.

The statewide results were broken down by region and demographic groups, but these results, because of the smaller numbers of people surveyed for each category, have a much wider margin of error, about 5 to 10 percentage points up or down, which means even large-seeming differences could be simply chance results.

Still, there were some clear, albeit not too surprising, differences: People in the Bay Area, for instance, are far less likely to consider air pollution to be a "big problem" than residents of the Central Valley, where pollution is much worse, the Los Angeles area or the Inland Empire. Political preferences also hewed to predictable regional lines, with Democrats favored in the liberal Bay Area and Los Angeles, and Republicans more popular elsewhere.

Latinos and African Americans, who tend to be concentrated in areas with worse than average air quality, are more likely than white people or Asian Americans to consider air pollution a serious health threat.

Global warming lawsuit accuses 5 power plants 8 states, N.Y. City join in seeking legal restrictions

[Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

Thursday, July 22, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle

California, seven other states and New York City filed the first global-warming lawsuit against power companies Wednesday, accusing five major plant operators of emitting gases that are causing temperatures to rise and threatening the planet's water, air and living creatures.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in New York, is an attempt to substitute court-imposed restrictions for the voluntary approach of President Bush. The administration has rejected the Kyoto Protocol limiting emissions and has declined to classify carbon dioxide -- which most scientists identify as the primary "greenhouse gas" -- as a pollutant.

"Global warming poses a serious threat to our environment, our natural resources, our public health and safety and our economy," California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said at a news conference in Los Angeles, one of four on the issue held around the nation. "Requiring these major polluters to do their part is crucial to successfully fighting the threat," he said.

"There is a vacuum at the federal level," said Gail Ruderman Feuer, a lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council, which filed a separate suit on behalf of nonprofit groups that claim global warming is harming their East Coast properties. "If there were any regulation, you would not need lawsuits."

In response, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a statement saying it is committed to rules that will require a 70 percent reduction in power plant emissions but has no authority to regulate greenhouse gases. The EPA said it was "building efficient and effective market-driven programs" to reduce cars' effects on the climate.

California is one of 11 states that have sued the EPA over its refusal to classify carbon dioxide as a pollutant. Then-Gov. Gray Davis was part of that suit. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger did not take part in Wednesday's suit, Lockyer said. Schwarzenegger's office declined to comment.

The largest of the five companies named in the suit, American Electric Power, does not consider litigation "a constructive approach to addressing climate change," said spokesman Pat Hemlepp.

"The climate change issue is a global issue, not something that's going to be addressed by one company or one industry or even one country," Hemlepp said.

He said his company, which is based in Ohio and operates plants in 11 states, was committed to a 10 percent reduction in its carbon dioxide emissions by 2006, either by lowering its own emissions or by buying credits from other companies that lower theirs.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute, a business advocacy group, accused Lockyer and his fellow attorneys general of "irresponsible political grandstanding" that would interfere with national policy and raise electricity prices.

The suit said the five companies -- American Electric Power, Southern Co., Xcel Energy, Cinergy Corp. and the Tennessee Valley Authority -- are the nation's largest emitters of carbon dioxide, and among them spew out 652 million tons of the gas a year. That amounts to one-quarter of the industry's emissions and nearly 10 percent of the nation's emissions from any human source, the lawsuit said.

The companies operate 174 fossil-fuel plants in 20 states, mostly in the South and Midwest. None of the plants is in California, but Lockyer said the state was entitled to sue because it faced dangers from global warming in the next few decades. Those include water shortages from a reduction in the Sierra snowpack and from salt contamination of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, increased wildfires, the inundation of coastal areas and a rise in heat-related deaths, Lockyer said.

The emissions are a "public nuisance," the suit said, like fumes from a stockyard or soot from a smokestack. The effects in this case are worldwide, the suit said, from gases that trap atmospheric heat and have already caused temperatures to rise.

The other states in the suit are Connecticut, New York, Iowa, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin.

The states are not seeking damages but want court orders requiring the companies to halt the increases in carbon dioxide emissions and then reduce them by a fixed percentage each year for at least a decade.

That could be readily accomplished, the suit said, by increasing plant efficiency, switching to other fuels such as natural gas or gasified coal and using alternatives such as wind and solar power.

Cal Crane honored by lung association

Wednesday, July 21, 2004

By Tami Jo Nix-Staff Writer - The Madera Tribune

The American Lung Association of Central California held its annual meeting and awards ceremony last Wednesday at Roger Rocka's Dinner Theater in Fresno.

Josette Merced Bello serves as the president and chief executive officer welcomed the assembly to the 86th annual meeting.

"This is a momentous year for the American Lung Association," said Bello. "Today, you join nearly one million volunteers and countless community supporters in commemorating the centennial celebration of the nation's first voluntary health organization."

Each year the association presents awards to valley businesses and individuals who work especially hard to improve the air quality in the San Joaquin Valley.

Cal Crane, chairman of the association was surprised and delighted when he received the 2004 Henry A. Randel for his many years of service to the association and lung health. Crane is a respiratory therapist and is head of the Sleep Disorder Department at Kaiser Permanente.

This award was presented by the 2002 Randel Award recipient, Sandra Eaton.

Other awards presented included the Clean Air Award to United Parcel Service for their use of compressed natural gas, a cleaner burning fuel.

The American Lung Association presented two Educator of the Year Awards to Dr. Lee Andersen Merced County Superintendent of Schools and Dorothy Slevkoff asthma care manager for Kaiser Permanente.

Sen. Dean Flores received the group's first ever Public Service Award for his work on the state level to improve valley air quality.

The American Lung Association President's award went to the Schneider family of Hanford for all their work with the asthma camp, Camp Sierra in Yosemite.

The City of Visalia received the group's Good Government Award for converting or replacing many of the city's vehicles with those run on compressed natural gas.

This event also served as the American Lung Association's annual meeting. Board members for last year are Dr. Malik Baz, Riki Donaghy, Laurie Frye, Colby Morrow, Judith Nibler, Dr. Michael Peterson, Jeff Russell, Julie Tymn and Cal Crane.

Members elected to the board for the next year included Laurie Frye, Riki Donaghy, Dr. Michael Peterson, Jerry Jones, Shirley Main, Judith Nibler and Cal Crane.

Valley gets a breather in air quality

Our moderate summer is also a reminder that our habits can control our air quality.

[Visalia Times-Delta, Editorial, Thursday, July 22, 2004](#)

It's even better when the news is good, as long as we all don't draw from that the conclusion that the problem is fixed. We just have been having a moderate summer.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District reports that so far this summer, air quality has been improved over last year. There hasn't even been a Spare the Air Day invoked yet this summer. Last year by this time, there were 17 Spare the Air Days.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issues a Spare the Air Day warning when smog levels reach unhealthy levels. Then people are asked to curtail some pollution-contributing activity. When the air quality gets even worse than that, the district advises children and seniors to stay indoors and curtail physical activity.

So far this summer that has not been necessary.

Air pollution control district officials would like to think that the improved air quality is because people's habits are changing, but they know better: It has been the weather. A combination of lower temperatures and more overcast days than usual has kept ozone concentration low.

It's still a hopeful sign that air quality has improved this summer. It's an indication of what it could be like every summer if we all take the few small steps to reduce smog-producing elements in the air.

For instance, the district reports that more than 91 million miles are driven by vehicles every day in the San Joaquin Valley. Reducing that number of miles by even a few million would make a huge difference in air quality, and that would only require that everybody take one less vehicle trip per day. Use a car pool, ride a bike, combine some errands, take public transportation every once in a while: That will do it.

The pollution control district is under no illusions that the air quality will remain at safe levels all summer. We still live amid some of the most polluted air in the nation. But the little breather we are getting so far reminds us that our air quality is under our control, even if it is subject to the weather.

Taking away traditions

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, July 22, 2004](#)

There is a battle brewing regarding the continued use of fireworks in celebration of our independence. Bakersfield Chief Frazee of the Bakersfield City Fire Department is not the real threat to fireworks use in our area. Watch out for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. They are the single biggest threat to our traditional July Fourth celebrations.

A recent article in *The Californian* pointed to particulate matter levels spiking on July 4. The source of the information was the SJVAPCD. At this point they are not offering any specifics on what they would like to see happen. It probably won't be long, though.

It will probably start with a propaganda campaign detailing specific numbers regarding how fireworks affect people with respiratory ailments. The study will most certainly point to the fact that the effects of the fireworks linger well after the last firework has burned out.

It wouldn't be surprising to see fireworks linked to several respiratory related deaths per year. Make no mistake about it. They will not be focusing on just home fireworks. Their focus will likely include professional fireworks displays as well.

If it all sounds farfetched, just remember they already took away our fireplaces. In the name of protecting us from ourselves they are slowly taking away our traditions and freedoms.

Folks, wake up and take notice. It won't be long until our barbecues will be outlawed, lawnmowers will require annual smog inspections and the area cattle will be required to wear some sort of emission control device.

-- CHRIS M. STRONG, Bakersfield