

## **Breezy spring helps Valley corral bad air**

### **Smog still unhealthy, but likely won't lead nation.**

By Mark Grossi / The Fresno Bee

also in the Modesto Bee, Friday, September 30, 2005

Ready for a breath of fresh air? For the first time in six years, it appears the San Joaquin Valley won't lead the nation in smog violations.

The smog season unofficially ends Saturday, and the Valley has only 69 violations, the area's lowest total since measurements started in the 1970s.

The South Coast Air Basin in Southern California leads the country with 81 violations this year.

As further evidence of improvement in 2005, Valley authorities called a third fewer "Spare the Air" days — bad-air days when people are asked to limit driving and other smog-making activities.

A cool, breezy spring helped hold down the number of violations, said officials from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. They added that new air rules and voluntary actions from industry and individuals also contributed.

But the battle against smog is far from over, they said. The air was healthier this year, but it wasn't actually healthy.

Federal officials allow only three violations over a three-year period to consider an area clean.

The Valley has had more than 300 violations in the past three years, still the worst in the nation during that time span.

"We are making strides," said spokeswoman Janelle Schneider of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"The 'Spare the Air' program has raised awareness and people are reducing emissions. But it's going to take more work."

The Valley may yet have more smog violations this year. While the season is generally over Saturday across the state, the Valley often has many violations in October.

Two years ago, monitors recorded 18 bad days in October. The last violation was four days before Halloween.

If the Valley gets 15 bad days in October, it will tie the all-time low number of 84, set in 1998.

Anything short of 15 will establish a Valley record for lowest number of violations.

Last year, there were only seven violations in October, so an all-time record is considered quite possible.

Usually, smog levels drop in October because the days are shorter, and there isn't as much heat.

Ozone, the main ingredient in smog, needs sunshine and heat to form.

But the Valley sometimes gets enough October heat for ozone, said Evan Shipp, supervising meteorologist for the air district. And there are other factors.

"It also depends on what kind of fire season you're having," Shipp said. "Forest fires release a lot of ozone precursors. We haven't had a lot of them this year compared to other years."

On the other end of the season, the spring weather was the dominant factor, preventing many April, May and even June violations with breezy storms.

The first "Spare the Air" day wasn't called until July, weeks later than it has occurred in some previous years. Such days are forecast on a county-by-county basis when the air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

Kern County had only 18 such days, compared with 27 the previous year.

Officials noted increases in Fresno, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, Merced, Madera and Kings counties, but all remained well below the numbers for 2003.

"The improvement is a cumulative effect," said air district spokeswoman Schneider.

"With district rules and businesses taking voluntary steps, it is affecting the amount of emissions here."

## **News from the San Joaquin Valley**

The Associated Press

in the Fresno Bee, Saturday, Oct. 1, 2005

FRESNO - Residents in the polluted San Joaquin Valley breathed a little easier through summer when there were less air quality violations than in previous years, air officials said.

A breezy spring, new pollution control rules and the voluntary collaboration of area residents who cut back on car use during particularly smoggy days helped keep the number of bad air days to 69 - the lowest since measurements started in the 1970s.

"We are making strides," said spokeswoman Janelle Schneider of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Smog levels usually go down in October because ozone, the main component of smog, needs heat to form in the atmosphere.

But it's still possible for the Valley to get enough heat to generate more ozone, said Evan Shipp, supervising meteorologist for the air district.

### **Dairy planners want your input**

**Residents will soon get chance to tell county officials what qualities should be analyzed**

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Oct. 1, 2005

Kern residents can soon tell county planners how to judge the first wave of 54,425 dairy cows trying to move to Kern.

Before the county begins analyzing six dairies for their air, water, smell and other environmental impacts, it will host three public meetings to give residents a say in which dairy qualities to analyze in depth.

These six are the first of more than 20 dairies trying to move to Kern with 214,108 cows in tow. They will be studied in three groups, and the first is a cluster of six dairies looking to settle north of Wasco.

"I won't have as many answers as I am interested in the questions," said Lorelei Oviatt, who is leading the county's dairy studies. "It's an opportunity for everyone to make sure I have a full picture (of what matters when it comes to dairies)."

County supervisors stalled these dairies more than a year ago in August, when supervisors asked planners to consider incoming cows' environmental impacts as a whole, rather than dairy by dairy.

Kern is already home to 304,900 dairy cows, according to planning documents.

The dairies' future neighbors are wary. Last November, Wasco voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure asking supervisors to keep dairies 10 miles from their city. The measure is toothless, but with more than 80 percent support, residents hope supervisors will listen.

"I would hope there is a compromise out there somewhere," said Wasco City Councilman Larry Pearson.

Besides environmental impacts, Pearson is concerned about what the dairy influx will do to Wasco's economy.

"Are we going to trade ... cows for a distribution center that offers 1,000 jobs?" he asked.

In-depth environmental studies can take as long as a year to complete, depending on the complexity of the subject.

## **Air quality in Valley shows improvement**

### **But the Valley has a long way to go, experts say**

By Shannon Darling, Staff writer

[Visalia Times-Delta, Friday, Sept. 30, 2005](#)

Summertime smog levels in the Central Valley have decreased dramatically over the past three years, but the air we breathe is still far from perfect, air regulators say.

According to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, the number of Spare the Air Days in Tulare County dropped to 18 in 2005 from 41 in 2003.

"We're seeing continued improvement in summertime air quality, and that's encouraging," said Jaime Holt, the District's public education administrator.

Spare the Air Days are called by the district on a county-by-county basis when air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

In Tulare County, the district called 39 Spare the Air days in 2003. In 2004, 15 were called and in 2005, 18 were called.

Brenda Turner, public information representative with the district, said she feels the reduction is because the District has over the past three years tightened up on industrial and agricultural air pollution.

"All these rules we are making, we feel, are making a difference," Turner said.

But Turner said air quality still has a long way to go.

For example, the Central Valley violated the 8-hour standard of ozone 69 times this summer. Last year there were 109 violations, but Turner said the Valley should only exceed the 8-hour limit no more than a few times a year.

"We are still a long way off," she said.

Turner said the Valley must meet the 8-hour ozone standards by 2013.

Turner attributed increased regulations on industry and agriculture for the reduction in Spare the Air days, in addition to people complying to Spare the Air Day suggestions such as car pooling and linking trips, but she also said weather may have played a role.

"Last year it seemed weather was a factor," she said, pointing out that 2004 was a relatively mild summer and heat plays a big role in creating ozone.

Dr. A.M. Aminian, director of the Allergy Institute in Fresno and Visalia, said that while the number of Spare the Air Days have gone down, it hasn't affected the number of patients he sees with respiratory problems.

"We are very happy that people are more aware of it and the number of Spare the Air Days has decreased, but people will still have respiratory problems," Aminian said.

He said it can take years to recover damage caused by ozone and smog.

"I think we have a long way to go to really change the environment," Aminian said.

Aminian said the weather may have played a role in the decreased number of high ozone days. In 2003, he said, the summer was long and hot. In 2004, the summer was mild, and this year, while there were a few weeks of high temperature, it was relatively mild, he said.

"We still have a long way to go before we can say we have a clean environment. The air is still bad," he said.

## **Valley making progress against air pollution, local, federal data show**

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer

[Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Sept. 30, 2005](#)

If August's clear hillside views weren't proof enough, this year's smog numbers show Kern is breathing easier.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District tallied 18 "Spare the Air" days this season -- down by a third from last year's 27 days. Spare the Air days are declared when air is expected to be unhealthy for everyone.

The San Joaquin Valley also is doing better by the federal measure. The valley has violated the eight-hour ozone standard on 69 days this year. Smog season is all but over, making it look like the valley won't touch last year's 109 days of violation.

"We've been making all these rules and we're really hopeful all that stuff is kicking in," said Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley air district. "It may take another year or two to see what is (causing the drop in pollution days)."

Arvin can usually be counted on for the worst ozone pollution of the summer, but that hasn't borne out this year, Turner said. A monitoring station in the Sierra foothills of Tulare County has registered the worst air, she said.

Spare the Air days are meant to urge residents and businesses to drive less, link errands into one big trip and make other concessions to air quality.

Environmentalists laud the valley's pollution strides, especially when it comes to dust and diesel particles, which haven't registered a violation in the valley since 2002. But the monitoring data is too new to show any kind of trend for ozone, said Brent Newell of the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

"I think it's way too early to say we're turning a corner on ozone," Newell said. "We had really great weather in the valley this summer. Early in summer there was a lot of rain and the heat wasn't there. How that affects the 2005 season, I don't know yet."

## **Week in Review: Breathing easier**

**This year's smog numbers show Kern is breathing easier**

[Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Oct. 2, 2005](#)

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## **Asthmatics troubled by smoky skies**

By Kerry Cavanaugh, Staff Writer

LA Daily News

Sept. 30, 2005

Smoke from the Topanga Fire blanketed the skies from Simi Valley to the Channel Islands on Thursday, choking residents in the path of the flames and irritating asthma sufferers in the San Fernando Valley and elsewhere in the Los Angeles Basin.

Fine particles and soot from burning vegetation can be inhaled and swallowed, tickling the throat and nose and stinging the eyes.

The smoke is particularly rough on those with respiratory problems, making it more difficult to breathe, causing chest pain and triggering asthma attacks.

Even healthy people were warned to avoid strenuous outdoor exercise if they can smell smoke or see ash.

"I certainly wouldn't go for a jog," said Mallory Ham, air pollution meteorologist with the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District.

"We just want people to pay attention to the air-quality forecasts and smoke advisories. With the air quality index this high, we want people to adjust outdoor activities. If you're an asthmatic, you should just stay indoors."

Schools in San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas kept the windows closed and the students inside because of the thick, smoky air.

"It's tough for everybody. It's like a rainy day, usually schools have planned activities," said Karen Maiorca, director of nursing for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"Any kind of exercise in the smoke is going to cause problems."

Burning brush and vegetation creates microscopic particles that are 30 times thinner than a human hair. The nose and upper airways usually filter out the larger particles, but the fine particles travel deep into the lungs and can enter the bloodstream.

Studies have linked high levels of fine particulate matter with increased rates of heart attacks and emergency room visits.

"People should use good common sense," said Keith Duval, compliance manager for Ventura County APCD. "If they're struggling with breathing or feel heaviness in the chest, or irritation of sinus and eyes, there's a good chance they are being affected by smoke."

## **Public health study of kids will be unprecedented**

### **Government to track 100,000 to adulthood**

By Susan FitzGerald

KNIGHT RIDDER NEWS SERVICE

Published in the San Diego Union-Tribune

September 30, 2005

PHILADELPHIA - The federal government yesterday launched its most ambitious study of the health of America's children, with a plan to follow more than 100,000 from womb to adulthood.

The National Children's Study, which will start in six communities nationwide including California's Orange County, will explore the many environmental influences that bear on children's well-being.

The study, which will begin enrolling participants in 2007, will look not only at traditional environmental factors such as air and water pollution, but also at issues such as neighborhood safety, family relationships and diet. It will examine the connection between environmental and genetic factors.

The study, projected to cost \$2.7 billion over about 25 years if fully implemented, also will attempt to explain racial and ethnic disparities - for instance, why black babies are more likely than white babies to be born prematurely and underweight, and why American Indian children are at high risk for diabetes and injuries.

The ultimate goal of the research is to prevent diseases and come up with better ways to treat them, federal health officials said.

"In their search for environmental influences in human health, study researchers plan to examine such factors as the food children eat, the air they breathe, their schools and neighborhoods, how

often they see a health care provider and even the composition of the house dust in their homes," Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, said at a news conference in Washington. The study, an effort of several federal agencies, could eventually include children from 105 counties. Besides Orange County, the other areas in the study are Montgomery County, Pa.; Duplin County, N.C.; Queens County, N.Y.; Salt Lake County, Utah; and Waukesha County, Wis.

If all goes as planned, initial results could be available starting in 2010, officials said.

The study comes amid growing concern that today's children are growing fat and coming down with diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure that used to be considered adult worries.

Both pregnant women and women who are not pregnant will be asked to be in the study, so that researchers can examine factors that may play a role in lifelong health even before conception takes place. In some cases, the women's partners will also be asked to participate.

"The good news is that 82 percent of our nation's 70 million children are in very good or excellent health," U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona said at the news conference.

But he said there are troubling trends taking hold, including the fact that 15 percent of American children, about 9 million of them, are overweight or obese.

Researchers will analyze blood, urine and other samples for exposure to chemicals, administer questionnaires and do exams to track children's growth and development up to age 21.

"The study will help us map how our environments, habits and activities affect our children's health," Carmona said.

The study was mandated by Congress in 2000. But money to begin the study has been limited. The federal agencies leading the study have pooled money to do the planning, about \$12 million in all this fiscal year.

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Oct. 2, 2005:](#)

### **Bakersfield needs trees**

I agreed with all of the letters recently published about "Refreshing East Hills shopping center." Thanks to those good citizens who took time to express their opinions.

I was particularly delighted to read the "Hop on mall train" letter submitted by Dick Taylor. I agree with all that he said, but especially his request that "gobs more shade trees" be planted in parking lots.

This has been a pet peeve of mine for at least 20 years, during which time I have avoided, if possible, shopping in any area that is treeless.

Could it not be a requirement of the Planning Department that developers of these commercial centers plant a specified number of shade trees per area so that all (or most) vehicles are shaded? It would go a long way toward beautifying the city as well as providing comfort for its citizens.

Trees help clean the air and lower temperatures, both of which would be beneficial to Bakersfield's reputation for dirty air and excessive heat. I heartily believe that if ever a city would benefit by increasing its tree canopy, it would be Bakersfield!

-- Shirley Lucas, Bakersfield

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Sept. 30, 2005:](#)

### **Solar can save money**

The local chapter of the Sierra Club recently sponsored a day-long solar conference for local home builders and government planners.

It was extremely well attended, with more than 60 participants representing the builders who are constructing more than 700 homes per month in Bakersfield.

Thanks to spokespersons from the California Energy Commission and solar panel manufacturers, they were able to find out the financial incentives to home buyers through the placing of solar panels on their roofs.

One builder, Castle & Cooke, already had planned to have solar on their homes in the next phase home development. The solar vendors were excited about coming to Bakersfield and entering this growing market.

No one has to be told of the higher costs of electricity. No one has to be told that we are living in a region with the highest air pollution. No one has to be told that if we produce electricity at home, one less power plant has to be built.

No one has to be told about how much sunlight we receive. Now, you, the consumer must take a role. Demand solar when you look at a new home. Tell the builder you want to save more than \$2,000 a year on your PG&E bill. Tell the builder that you want a solar home with a higher resale value.

Thanks to the solar conference, all the builders can give you an answer of "yes."

-- Harry Love, Solar Conference Coordinator

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, Sept. 29 2005:](#)

## **Public transit crucial for Measure C extension**

### **Make it more efficient**

In response to Jasmin Delgado (letter Sept. 26): I also say shame on local politicians for failing to allocate the appropriate funding from Measure C for adequate and timely public transportation in the city and county of Fresno.

I am a student at Fresno Pacific University and, although I have a car, I have made a commitment to take public transit to and from school in an effort to do my part for cleaner air.

It takes me nearly an hour and a half to travel the same distance on the bus that it takes me 20 minutes to travel by car (and that is if the buses and connections are on time). I daily encounter elderly persons and those with disabilities who are late for doctor appointments or meetings because the buses are late, their connections left early or the lift gate on the bus is not working properly.

It is no wonder the people of Fresno will not choose public transit over their cars. We as taxpayers expect public transportation to get us from point A to point B efficiently. If this were the case, perhaps more people would choose public transportation over their cars.

Angela Farrar, Fresno