

Spare the Air season starts

Residents asked to do their part on bad air days

By Laura Florez, Staff writer

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, June 7, 2005

Starting today, Tulare County residents could end up ditching their cars at a moment's notice in order to slash ozone levels in the summer.

As the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District kicks off the annual Spare the Air campaign today, residents will voluntarily be asked through September to ride bikes, walk, carpool or take the bus to work on bad air days in Tulare County.

"We have a serious problem with our summertime air pollution," said Brenda Turner, a spokeswoman for the district.

The campaign's goal is to reduce levels of lung-damaging ozone, which soars in the summer heat.

Ozone, a key component of smog, is produced when vehicle exhaust and other components combine in the atmosphere at high temperatures.

To reduce that, nearly 700 businesses in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District are participating in the voluntary program. Eighty of those businesses are in Tulare County.

"We've consistently gotten a lot of participation from Valley companies, and every year, we sign on more employers to the program," said Jaime Holt, a district spokeswoman.

The businesses get notifications from air regulators when they predict a bad air day, and in turn, encourage their employees to do what they can to help reduce ozone levels. This includes using public transportation or carpooling.

Last year in Tulare County, the district called 15 Spare the Air days, while in 2003 there were 39, Turner said.

"It shows that everything that everyone is doing from farmers to people in the oil industry as well as other individuals in the public is having a cumulative effect and is reducing air pollution," she said.

With 3,200 employees, Kaweah Delta Health Care District says it wanted to participate in the program for two reasons.

For one, it not only helps the environment, but it also helps ease parking woes in downtown Visalia when employees ride buses, walk or carpool to work, said Angela Bouma, a district spokeswoman.

"We're a large employer and we're in the presence of the community," she said. "It's always important to lead by example."

Parents might want to lead by example this summer by not letting their children play outside on a bad air day, Turner said.

Children are particularly affected by summertime smog.

In April, an American Lung Association study found that children living in the Valley show diminished lung capacity and increased susceptibility to asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases.

"We see a lot of respiratory problems in the summer. Parents want to be very careful on a [bad air day] that their child isn't playing outside," she said.

Fresno, Kern, Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties have the worst air in the nation for smog and particle pollution, according to the study.

Tips to Spare the Air

- Carpool, vanpool or take the bus
- Postpone the use of gas-powered lawn-care equipment
- Use an electric briquette lighter
- Keep cars tuned up

For information on how to Spare the Air or become an employer partner, call (661) 326-6900 or www.valleyair.org.

Ozone levels

For ozone levels:

- 0-50 is good
- 51-100 is moderate
- 101-200 is unhealthful
- 201-300 is very unhealthful
- 301+ is hazardous

Official smog season begins

Valley has had only five violations -- so far.

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, June 7, 2005

The San Joaquin Valley today officially begins coping with smog season, even though the air is not particularly dirty.

The Valley, which perennially leads the nation in daylong smog violations, has only five bad days so far this spring. That's about a quarter of last year's total to date. Credit unsettled, breezy weather, scouring the air.

"We've had continuing storms through April and May this year," said supervising meteorologist Evan Shipp of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The clean spring does not necessarily mean easy breathing in summer.

The air district today is kicking off the ninth annual Spare the Air program, encouraging 3.6 million residents to back off smog-producing activities. People are asked to voluntarily carpool or postpone using gasoline-powered lawn equipment on 20 to 45 days a year. When the district forecasts an unhealthy air day, officials e-mail and fax notification to businesses and companies participating in the Spare the Air program.

The first Spare the Air day probably won't be called this week, officials said. Temperatures are expected to remain low, with highs in the low to mid-80s, the National Weather Service reported. But the Valley usually warms as June progresses.

"You have to prepare for the warm conditions," Shipp said. "Our smog season really gets going in July."

Smog is mostly ozone, a corrosive gas that forms when chemicals from such sources as vehicle exhaust cook in the sunshine on still, warm days. Ozone attacks the skin, eyes and lungs. It can aggravate asthma or bronchitis.

The biggest source of ozone-forming chemicals is vehicles, and motorists drive 94 million miles daily in the Valley. Over the past six years, no place in the country has more daylong violations of the health standard.

But this year the South Coast, Mojave Desert and Salton Sea all have more bad days at this point, according to the state Air Resources Board. Meteorologists explained that some storms in April and May did not move far enough south to stir up pollutants in those places.

The unsettled, breezy weather has clipped the Valley many times this spring, keeping the air clean. Still, there has been at least one hint of what may come this summer.

Two weeks ago, temperatures spiked briefly in Central California. Arvin in Kern County wound up violating the health standard. If only one monitoring station exceeds the health standard, the whole Valley is out of compliance for the day.

The next day, Maricopa and Parlier went beyond the standard, adding another bad day for the Valley.

By the third day of the warm-up -- May 26 -- violations occurred on eight monitors. Unhealthy air was found in Fresno, Bakersfield, Arvin, Edison, Oildale, Maricopa, Shafter and even Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

"When the conditions set up, that's what happens," Shipp said.

Briefs

S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, June 7, 2005

MODESTO, Calif. (AP) - Central Valley air regulators are kicking off the "Spare the Air" campaign Tuesday, part of a yearly effort to cut levels of lung-damaging ozone which soars in the summer heat.

Ozone is a key component of smog, and is produced when vehicle exhaust and other components combine in the atmosphere at high temperatures.

Nearly 700 businesses in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District participate in the voluntary program.

"We've consistently gotten a lot of participation from valley companies, and every year, we sign on more employers to the program." said Jaime Holt, public information administrator for the air district. "We're very pleased with the response we've gotten."

The businesses get notifications from air regulators when they predict a bad air day, and in turn, encourage their employees to do what they can to help reduce ozone levels. This includes using public transportation or car pooling.

Children are particularly affected by summertime smog.

In April, an American Lung Association study found that children living in the valley show diminished lung capacity, and increased susceptibility to asthma and other chronic respiratory diseases.

Fresno, Kern, Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties have the worst air in the nation for smog and particle pollution, according to the study.

Diesel shuttle order on hold

Natural gas buses urged by some

By Alex Dobuzinskis

Los Angeles Daily News, Tuesday, June 07, 2005

BURBANK -- Clean-air advocates on Monday asked the board that governs Bob Hope Airport to nix plans to buy five diesel-powered shuttle buses and instead work with them to build a fueling station for natural-gas buses.

But members of the airport authority board for Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena did not immediately welcome the offer, and they delayed any decision on the buses for two weeks.

The airport's outdated diesel fleet is being replaced, and the five buses would be the last ones needed to complete the replacement.

The bus issue has become increasingly controversial as airport officials contend that a recent agreement with Burbank city government would allow them to buy diesel buses. Burbank officials, however, have expressed concern about the proposed purchase.

At Monday's airport authority meeting, Burbank City Councilman Todd Campbell argued that choosing diesel over natural gas would harm residents' health.

City officials have studied possible city-owned sites near the airport that could be used for a natural-gas fueling station. And an official from Clean Energy -- a company that runs a natural-gas fueling station used for Burbank city vehicles -- offered to underwrite the cost of building a second station.

"The city of Burbank's commitment to utilize this facility as their second station more than justifies that economic investment," said Chad Lindholm, account manager for Clean Energy. "With the airport authority's support, Clean Energy ... is willing to have the station up and operational within six months."

While the same reduced rate would be charged for natural gas for Burbank vehicles and airport buses, Clean Energy would increase the rate charged to private operators to make it more consistent with the local market price, Lindholm said.

Officials from the South Coast Air Quality Management District told authority members that the airport might be able to get a grant from their agency to help build a natural-gas fueling station.

The board decided to delay any decision for two weeks to allow more review.

Some board members expressed frustration, including Chris Holden, who suggested the debate was a "renegotiation" of the recently concluded deal with Burbank city government that would allow airport officials to purchase diesel buses.

"This is trickery. It's blindsiding," Holden said. "And I think that it's inappropriate in terms of what we went through to get to a place of agreement, including on these environmental issues, only to find ourselves back looking at components of the agreement."

[Editorial, The Madera Tribune, Monday, June 06, 2005](#)

Gore discovers global warming

By Charles Doud-Editor & Publisher, The Madera Tribune

Former Vice President Al Gore, in San Francisco to address an international assembly of mayors on environmental issues, urged the officials to get busy and try to stop, or at least slow down global warming.

Gore told the mayors that climate change was already melting glaciers and changing weather patterns, and that if something wasn't done quickly, the planet would see a dramatic rise in violent storms, infectious disease, deadly heat waves and rising sea levels that will force the evacuation of low-lying cities such as Calcutta, Shanghai and New York City within decades.

In case these mayors start to believe Gore discovered global warming, while inventing the Internet, let's hope they all took freshman geology in college. If they had, they would have learned

that global warming has been going on for about the last 18,000 years, when the population of the earth wasn't much more than a smidgen of what it is now,

Many scientists believe we actually still are in an ice age, and that it won't be long before the warming phase which characterizes the present day will be reversed, and that we will head back into global cooling. The climate hasn't always been as it is now, nor is it likely to be in the future, because climactic change has been the rule, not the exception.

It is a good thing for people, who do a fair share of the polluting, to try to reduce pollution, because it is the right thing to do for ourselves and immediate neighbors.

But if you think cutting back on greenhouse gasses will do much to halt global warming, expect to be disappointed.