

Heat, smog create Spare the Air day

BY SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, June 22, 2006

Today, breathing is dangerous.

Meteorologists say today's smog pollution will jump to unhealthy levels, making it the first official Spare the Air day of the season.

Friday will be no better, and unless the weather cools and winds pick up, our noxious haze isn't going anywhere, said Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"It's going to be hot and it's going to be smoggy," he said. "People need to take precautions."

The Spare the Air program is a means of warning locals when the air becomes unhealthy for everyone, and asking them to skip errands and other smog-inducing activities until the weather breaks.

Temperatures are expected to reach 108 degrees by Saturday, creating ideal conditions for combustion fumes and other chemicals to combine and form ozone, the chief ingredient in smog. Without a breeze, that smog stays put.

Smog was already getting bad Wednesday, when the district's air-quality yardstick, known as the Air Quality Index, crept to 154. Anything above 150 is considered unhealthy for the general public.

Today's index is expected to reach 172, a level that ties with Kern's smoggiest day last year.

To find out the air quality forecast, check *The Californian's* weather page, or visit www.valleyair.org.

Here's a Spare the Air crash course:

Q: What is ozone?

Ozone is formed when pollution from cars, trucks, refineries, power plants, industrial operations and other sources react in the heat of the sun. Ozone aggravates asthma, reduces lung function and could cause permanent lung damage.

Q: What should I do to protect myself?

Avoid outdoor exertion, especially in the middle of the day.

Q: How many Spare the Air days should we expect?

A typical Kern season has between 20 and 45 Spare the Air days. Last year Kern had 18, down from 27 in 2004 and 41 in 2003.

Q: What should I do to minimize smog pollution?

- Shop on the Internet.
- Link trips instead of running separate errands.
- Car pool.
- Recycle.
- Use an electric starter instead of lighter fluid to start your barbecue.
- Don't top off your gas tank.
- Trade in your old car for a newer one.
- Install energy-efficient appliances.
- Walk to lunch.
- Don't ride off-road vehicles or run gas-powered lawn equipment.
- Make sure paints and solvents are water-based instead of oil-based.
- Do anything that will save gasoline or electricity.

Spare the Air issued today

Valley pollution agency issues first air quality alert this year

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, June 22, 2006

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has forecast a Spare the Air day for today in Tulare County.

Air quality officials issued an alert that encourages Valley residents to take steps to reduce air pollution. Today will be the first Spare the Air day of this year.

A Spare the Air day is generally declared when the pollution index is projected to reach 151 which is, a measure of pollution in the air, said Janelle Schneider, a spokeswoman for the air district. It can also be declared for the region when one or more counties is experiencing high pollution levels.

Today, the projection is for a pollution reading of 127 in Tulare County.

Last year, 18 Spare the Air days were declared in Tulare County, Schneider said. In 2004, there were 15, and in 2003, there were 39 Spare the Air days.

When Spare the Air days are declared, people are asked to limit driving and the use of small, gasoline-driven engines, such as those that propel lawn mowers.

Schneider said children and people with respiratory conditions are especially vulnerable.

Because vehicle emissions are the biggest cause of pollution, Schneider said the most important thing for people to do is to reduce their driving.

Spare the Air day tips

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District offers people the following tips to Spare the Air:

- Share a ride or use public transportation
- Do all errands at one time
- Use water-based paints and solvents instead of oil-based products
- Walk or ride a bike instead of driving.

News briefs

Valley residents urged to reduce smog activities

The Fresno Bee, Thursday, June 22, 2006

Residents in six San Joaquin Valley counties are being asked to curb smog-making activities today and Friday.

People in Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings and Tulare counties and the Valley portion of Kern County are being asked to cut down on activities such as driving or doing yard work with gasoline-powered tools, said the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

It is the Valley's first day this year of the "Spare the Air" program, a voluntary smog-reduction effort.

Hot weather is promoting higher concentrations of ozone, which can trigger asthma and other lung-related problems.

Triple-digit heat to bake the valley through weekend

By Ken Carlson, Bee Staff Writer

The Modesto Bee, June 22, 2006

Summer is here, and with it scorching temperatures, smog, damaging rays and a final rush of snowmelt from the Sierra Nevada.

Today's high temperature, forecast for 107 in Modesto, won't set a record by itself. But the Northern San Joaquin Valley is going to get a prolonged stretch of days above 100 degrees, and that is unusual for June.

It's expected to be 107 again Friday and Saturday and 104 on Sunday, according to the National Weather Service. The triple-digit temperatures could persist until Wednesday.

Elizabeth Morse, chief meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Sacramento, said June hasn't had a hot streak like this since the 1980s.

Daytime temperatures exceeded 100 degrees for seven consecutive days in June 1985 and nine straight in June 1981.

Before that, you have to go back to June 1929, which had seven days in a row above the century mark.

This week, a high-pressure ridge is keeping the air warm from the valley floor up to 15,000 feet. An offshore flow of air from the north and northeast is warmed as it comes down out of the mountains, Morse said. In addition, the ridge is keeping delta breezes from cooling the San Joaquin Valley.

"There is nothing in the immediate future that will break this heat," Morse said, although she suggested that cooling clouds could materialize late next week.

SPARE THE AIR - The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District included Merced and counties to the south in its first Spare the Air declaration of the summer. The declaration for today and Friday was issued because pollution is forecast at levels considered unhealthy for the general public.

Children, the elderly and people with respiratory conditions are especially vulnerable.

The primary pollutant is ozone, which is produced when sunlight reacts with gases from cars, trucks and industrial plants.

The meteorological conditions are trapping the pollutants in the air over the valley. The air quality is expected to be harmful during the weekend, said Stephen Shaw, a supervising air quality specialist for the district.

Ozone gas irritates the lungs, creating problems for people with asthma and emphysema. Healthy people may even feel pain in their lungs.

The lung damage is believed to increase the heart attack risk for people with compromised health.

"If you have heart disease, the heart is not working well and you have a hard time getting blood circulating through the body," Shaw said.

The pollution and heat are the worst from noon to 6 p.m., so use common sense. Don't cut the grass or let children play outside when it's 107.

AMBULANCE COMPANIES READY - Because of the hot spell, ambulance companies are expecting calls to increase over the next several days. Those requiring medical attention may include elderly people with respiratory distress or victims of heat exhaustion.

"There are a lot of people who are new to the area or have taken construction jobs in Modesto," said Jason Sorrick, spokesman for American Medical Response. "They forget they need to take precautions to keep from being dehydrated."

Graham Pierce, the Modesto-based California director for PHI Air Medical Group, has recently prepared talks on preventing heat exhaustion during backpacking trips in the wilderness. More

often, the air ambulance serving Doctors Medical Center is dispatched to assist day trippers at places such as Yosemite National Park.

"People get out of their cars and go for a hike, and it does not take long to get into trouble because they are overweight," Pierce said.

Another health threat is sunburn. Blistered skin invites infection, and sunburn over a large area may prevent the body from sweating and cooling itself.

DEMAND ON ELECTRICITY - Summer's first heat wave wasn't expected to spawn any massive brownouts or blackouts.

But experts say the state still could approach record peak demand for electricity over the next four days.

"We've declared Thursday through Sunday 'Power Watch' days," said Stephanie McCorkle, a spokeswoman for the California Independent Service Operator. "We're not going to see any power outages, but we're still asking people to conserve."

The California ISO is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation charged with operating the majority of the state's high-voltage wholesale power grid.

"We're going to watch this heat wave very carefully," McCorkle said. "We're asking people to conserve where they can and when they can."

Higher temperatures may have contributed to a power failure in northeast Modesto Wednesday afternoon.

Homes in the area bordered by Sylvan, Roselle and Briggsmore avenues and Albers Road lost power at 4:45 p.m., Modesto Irrigation District spokeswoman Maree Hawkins said. She did not know how many homes were affected.

Most customers had power restored within an hour, with electricity back on in all the homes by 7 p.m.

MID employees had not determined the cause, but Hawkins said it's not unusual to have disruptions when the weather gets hot and the load increases.

"Around the first hot time of the summer, we find out where there's some imbalances (in the system)," she said.

NO SNOWMELT PROBLEMS - The weekend's expected run of 100-plus degree days is not expected to cause any serious problems for the region's reservoirs or rivers.

The water elevation at Don Pedro Reservoir was reported at 828.4 feet Thursday. The maximum is 830 feet.

"We've got about 20,000 acre-feet of space left," said Wes Monier, strategic issues and planning manager at the Turlock Irrigation District. "For all practical purposes, we're full."

But there's enough flexibility in the system, Monier said, to avoid flooding along the rivers and prevent water from overtopping the reservoir.

Monier warned, however, that water in the Tuolumne, as well as the region's other major rivers, is running high, fast and cold. That will make conditions treacherous for swimming or even a quick, cooling dip.

Bee staff writer Michael G. Mooney contributed to this report.

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SoCal Edison ditches plan to restart Mohave power plant

Associated Press

In the LA Daily News Wed., June 21, 2006

PHOENIX - Southern California Edison has abandoned plans to upgrade and restart the shuttered Mohave Generating Station power plant near Laughlin, Nev., saying high costs and regulatory uncertainties drove the decision.

Edison, which serves the Santa Clarita and Antelope valleys, shut the plant down on Jan. 1 because it needed pollution-control upgrades to comply with a Clean Air Act settlement, a new water supply and pipeline upgrades costing \$1.1 billion.

The company has said uncertain coal and water supply had driven the decision to delay the pollution upgrades, estimated to cost \$720 million in 2002.

Until Monday, Edison had planned to spend the money over the next four years to upgrade the plant.

But the utility decided there were too many problems and the plant needed too large a repair job for the effort to go forward.

"Our decision at this point is firm," said Dick Rosenblum, senior vice president of generation for Edison. "We decided it was not an asset we should participate in for (many) reasons."

Edison operated the 1,580-megawatt plant since it came on line in 1971 and owned 56 percent of the facility on the Colorado River. Other owners included the Salt River Project in Arizona, with 20 percent, Nevada Power Co. with 14 percent and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power with 10 percent. It could provide enough electricity for 1.5 million average homes.

Salt River Project and Nevada Power officials said they would not try to restart the plant without a larger partner.

"We're not going to go it alone," said Scott Harelson, spokesman for Salt River. "If we are going to participate in the future, we would have to have new owners."

The SCE portion of the plant could be sold or the whole facility decommissioned.

For decades, the Mohave plant has been blamed for some of the pollution obscuring views in the Grand Canyon. Environmental groups sued under the Clean Air Act to force the plant to add modern pollution controls, and in 1999 Edison agreed to do the upgrade by Jan. 1, 2006, or shut the plant down.

Coal for the plant came from the Black Mesa Mine on the Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona, and there were questions about long-term mining contracts and permits. The coal was mixed with water and then put in a 273-mile slurry pipeline to the plant.

Many Navajo and Hopi tribal members raised concerns about groundwater depletion and a study is being done to try to find a more plentiful water source for the pipeline.

The Black Mesa mine provided hundreds of high-paying jobs that will be hard to replace in the remote region.

"Developments in the California energy markets kind of caught up with them and convinced the utility it was time to start looking forward instead of backward," said Bill Hedden, executive director of the Grand Canyon Trust, one of the groups that sued. "We're glad the pollution from the plant is going to stop, but we're not happy that so many of the consequences have fallen on the Hopi and Navajo peoples."

Summer's here -- heat, smog too

Transit agencies offer free rides for Spare the Air Day

Michael Cabanatuan, Staff Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, June 22, 2006

Summer made its annual appearance in the Bay Area Wednesday, and it's off to a hot and smoggy start.

With temperatures today expected to hit the 80s around the bay and over 100 inland, it's perfect for sitting in the swimming pool or atop a block of ice. The hot weather is also ideal for brewing ground-level ozone, or smog.

Air quality officials declared today a Spare the Air Day in hopes of cutting motor vehicle emissions, the top smog source. Virtually every transit agency in the Bay Area will offer free rides all day.

"We hope people use this opportunity to ride transit free and to protect the air," said Luna Salaver, spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

A high-pressure system loitering off the coast is responsible for the hot, windless weather that is expected to continue through the weekend, said Suzanne Anderson, a spokeswoman for the National Weather Service.

Today's forecast calls for the temperature to reach 80 in San Francisco, 90 in Oakland, 93 in Redwood City, 97 in San Jose, 95 in San Rafael, 98 in Napa, 102 in Concord and 101 in Livermore. It will be even toastier in the San Joaquin Valley, where 106 is forecast in Stockton.

Wednesday's high temperatures were 84 in San Francisco, 88 at San Francisco International Airport, 95 in San Rafael and San Jose, 91 in Oakland, 90 in Hayward, 74 in Pacifica, 99 in Concord, 100 in Livermore and Gilroy. No records were broken.

Temperatures could cool a bit on Friday when winds begin to return at the coast, Anderson said.

"There might be a little cooling at the immediate coast," she said, "and it could filter into the bay a little. But inland will still be very hot."

Air quality and transportation officials announced earlier this month that rides would be free on 25 transit agencies for the first three weekday, nonholiday Spare the Air Days through Oct. 13. Salaver said Friday could be declared Spare the Air Day No. 2.

"The only thing that could change that is the wind factor," she said.

Twenty-five transit agencies -- including Muni, BART, AC Transit, Caltrain, SamTrans, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Golden Gate Transit and Ferries and most of the region's smaller transit operators -- will throw open their gates or cover their fare boxes during their regular service hours.

Last year, when only one Spare the Air Day was called, an additional 21,000 riders took advantage of free rides between 4 a.m. and 9 a.m. on 21 participating transit systems.

Nobody is sure how many additional riders will board buses, trains, ferries and streetcars on Thursday, said Randy Rentschler, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which is paying the bulk of the \$7.5 million bill for three free-transit Spare the Air Days. But he said that transit agencies have geared up to handle larger-than-usual loads.

"We don't want to give service away for free," he said, "and not have enough out there."

For more information, see www.511.org <<http://www.511.org>> or www.sparetheair.org.

Free transit rides

Free rides are being offered all day today on 25 Bay Area transit agencies as part of Spare the Air Day, an effort to reduce smog on hot, windless days.

-- San Francisco Muni

-- BART

-- AC Transit

- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
- SamTrans
- Caltrain
- Cloverdale Transit
- Golden Gate Transit and Ferries
- Altamont Commuter Express
- Alameda-Oakland Ferry
- Alameda Harbor Bay Ferry
- Benicia Breeze
- County Connection
- Dumbarton Express
- Fairfield/Suisun Transit
- Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (Wheels)
- Petaluma Transit
- Rio Vista Breeze
- Santa Rosa CityBus
- Sonoma County Transit
- Tri-Delta Transit
- Union City Transit
- Vacaville City Coach
- Napa VINE
- WestCAT

Spare the Air day declared for Thursday

by Michael Cabanatuan, Chronicle Staff Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Wednesday, June 21, 2006

SAN FRANCISCO -- Bay Area transit agencies will offer free rides to everyone all day Thursday, which air quality officials have declared the first Spare the Air Day of 2006.

Twenty-five transit agencies -- including Muni, BART, AC Transit, Caltrain, SamTrans, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Golden Gate Transit and Ferries and most of the region's smaller transit operators

-- will throw open their gates or cover their fare boxes during their regular service hours.

Regional air quality and transportation officials hope offering free rides on virtually every one of the Bay Area's transit systems will lure drivers out of their cars and reduce vehicle emissions, which are the region's leading cause of air pollution.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District declared the Spare the Air Day this afternoon after meteorologists predicted hot weather and little or no wind -- perfect conditions for brewing up ground-level ozone or smog.

Air quality and transportation officials said earlier this month that transit rides would be free all day on the first three Spare the Air Days that fall on weekdays that are not holidays until Oct. 13.

Last year, only one Spare the Air day was called. Free rides were offered between 4 a.m. and 9 a.m. on 21 transit agencies, luring an additional 21,000 riders.

Nobody is sure how many additional riders will board buses, trains, ferries and streetcars on Thursday, said Luna Salaver, a spokeswoman for the air district, but she said that transit agencies have geared up to handle larger-than-usual loads.

Transit agencies offering free rides include: San Francisco Muni, BART, AC Transit, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, SamTrans, Caltrain, Golden Gate Transit and Ferries, Altamont Commuter Express, Alameda-Oakland Ferry, Alameda Harbor Bay Ferry, Benicia Breeze, County Connection, Dumbarton Express, Fairfield/Suisun Transit, Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (Wheels), Petaluma Transit, Rio Vista Breeze, Santa Rosa CityBus, Sonoma County Transit, Tri Delta Transit, Union City Transit, Vacaville City Coach, Napa VINE, Cloverdale Transit and WestCAT.

For more information, visit sparetheair.org.

Air quality prompts transit free-for-all Commuters can ride area buses, ferries, BART trains at no charge today

By Erik N. Nelson, Staff Writer
Inside Bay Area, June 22, 2006

Commuters will ride free today on nearly all of the Bay Area's transit systems as a combination of high pressure, heat and light winds threaten to produce unhealthy air quality.

"The overarching theme is for people to get out of their cars and use transit," said Luna Salaver, spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which is running the Spare the Air program.

"We're hoping that people will take advantage of the free commutes. Once they find out how easy it is to use transit, hopefully after the three (free) days are used, they'll continue to use transit whenever we call a Spare the Air Day," she said.

The day was declared because a confluence of factors - hot air, little wind and high pressure - that help car exhaust and other pollutants such as evaporating fuel at gas stations, paints and household chemicals such as hairspray create ground-level ozone. Vehicle exhaust accounts for about 45 percent of those emissions, Salaver said.

Air district officials predict the air quality index will reach 106 in the eastern parts of the East Bay, a large region that includes eastern Alameda County, all of Contra Costa County and southern Solano County. The unhealthy threshold is 101, Salaver said.

The expanded \$7.5 million program reimburses 25 area transit agencies, including BART, Muni, AC Transit, SamTrans, WHEELS, and Caltrain, for the entire operating day. The air agency says it is the largest free transit smog-fighting program in the nation.

Funding for the program comes from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program, the Transportation Fund for Clean Air and state air district funding.

The 2005 program funded only the morning commute for two days, but it was only invoked on one day, July 26, to stave off smog.

This year's program, which runs from June 1 through Oct. 13, has enough funding for three entire days.

For Corinne Waller, an administrative assistant, free BART will be a strong incentive to show up in Fremont before station parking is usually gobbled up at 7:30 a.m. Her commute from her home in San Jose to downtown Oakland is already half transit, but a lack of parking prompts her to drive about half of her workdays.

"I'll just have to get to the station a little early," she said as she waited for her car at an Oakland parking garage.

On the other hand, accountant Lee Wilson said the program wouldn't help his commute from Montclair in the hills to downtown Oakland. "I'm not real close to a bus and I don't have definite hours, so I'll just drive like I usually do."

On BART, which collects more than \$900,000 in fares on a typical weekday, bleary-eyed commuters who insist on inserting their cards into fare gates will find the slots covered up, said BART spokesman Linton Johnson.

The program started four years ago when the Livermore-Amador Valley Transit Authority, or WHEELS, started offering free rides on bad air days, followed by BART in 2004 and 20 area transit agencies in 2005.

Spare the Air Day dos

- Leave car/SUV at home
- Ride free public transit
- If you must drive, carpool
- Call 511 or log onto 511.org to get transit information.
- Combine necessary errands into one trip.
- Avoid strenuous activities outdoors during the heat of the day. If you must exercise or do manual labor, try to do it in the early morning or after sunset.

Spare the Air Day don'ts

- Pump gasoline during the morning or afternoon. Wait until after 6 p.m.
- Use gasoline-powered equipment such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers and trimmers. Electric appliances are OK.
- Use any products that give off fumes containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as paint, hairspray, cleaning fluids. Such chemicals evaporate easily and contribute to the formation of smog.

Today's free rides

- Muni; ACE ; AC Transit; Alameda-Oakland Ferry; Alameda-Harbor Bay Ferry; BART; Benicia Breeze ; Caltrain ; Cloverdale Transit; County Connection; Dumbarton Express; Fairfield/Suisun Transit; Golden Gate Transit and Ferries; Livermore-Amador Valley Transit Authority (WHEELS); Petaluma Transit; Rio Vista Breeze; SamTrans; Santa Rosa CityBus; Sonoma County Transit; Tri Delta Transit; Union City Transit; Vacaville City Coach; Napa VINE; VTA; WestCat.

For more information, log on to <http://www.sparetheair.org>.

Contact Erik Nelson at enelson@angnewspapers.com <mailto:enelson@angnewspapers.com> and read his Capricious Commuter blog at <http://www.ibabuzz.com/transportation>.

Foes of Bigger Airport Consider Legal Action

Residents and school district officials speak after the city approves an environmental report for expansion.

By Nancy Wride, staff writer

L.A. Times, Thursday, June 22, 2006

A day after a divided Long Beach City Council took a step forward on a proposed expansion of Long Beach Airport, opponents of airport growth on Wednesday began to talk about legal challenges.

On Tuesday night, the council voted 5 to 2 to accept the environmental impact report on the project.

On Wednesday, Cyndy Day-Wilson, a lawyer for the Long Beach Unified School District, acknowledged that the district was contemplating suing the city, on grounds that the EIR was flawed and did not adequately take into account a larger airport's potential effect on schoolchildren.

"I certainly believe that potential is there," added outgoing school board President Suja Lowenthal, who last week urged the council to reject the EIR. She said it failed to address ways to ease the impact on tens of thousands of students in California's third-largest school district.

"The board did authorize doing whatever it takes to ensure there is proper mitigation for the schools," added Lowenthal, who next month will become one of three new City Council members.

About 200 people attended Tuesday's often-tense council meeting, at which council members also denied the claims of 49 parties appealing the Planning Commission's May 11 vote to certify the EIR as legally adequate. Appellants included individual residents as well as the school district and the Long Beach Parent Teacher Assn.

At a public hearing June 13, a majority of speakers opposed the EIR. Many said they were especially worried that a bigger airport terminal eventually would lead to more daily flights.

They also said they feared that the city's airport noise ordinance - which limits flights to 41 per day - would end up being challenged and that the Federal Aviation Administration would push to increase commercial flights if the airport expanded its parking for planes and cars.

Opponents of expansion also cited air pollution and classrooms disrupted by noise.

But on Tuesday night, after dueling motions and substitute motions and friendly amendments to motions, City Council members Laura Richardson, Val Lerch, Jackie Kell, Bonnie Lowenthal and Tonia Reyes Uranga voted to deny the appeals and accept the EIR on the expansion with the number of plane parking spaces capped at 12 - two more spots than the airport currently has.

City Atty. Bob Shannon said Wednesday that the approved motion also called for "sound attenuation" on certain homes and schools, but there were no specifics mentioned on how that would be determined.

Council members Rae Gabelich and Patrick O'Donnell voted against accepting the EIR. The council then voted 4 to 3 to move forward with a site plan for a terminal project of 97,545 square feet.

John Eastman, a Long Beach resident and Chapman University law professor who had previously told the council that people wanted the airport modernized - "not supersized" - said Wednesday there were several legal fronts that opponents would consider in the next few days.

For one thing, he said, the City Council did not allow residents to rebut the city's presentation Tuesday. He said Shannon had promised them in writing that they could do so. Shannon disputed this and said that regardless, such a claim would not be a valid legal challenge.

"A court will weigh the legality of the EIR," Shannon said. "It will not be based on Robert's Rules of Order."

Cancer Study Cites Hazards of Indoor Air for N.Y., L.A. Teens **Survey of students finds health risks for formaldehyde and dichlorobenzene in homes and schools.**

By Marla Cone, staff writer
L.A Times, June 22, 2006

Teenagers in Los Angeles and New York City face a substantial - and strikingly similar - cancer risk from breathing the air, largely because of toxic chemicals inside their homes and schools, a new scientific study shows.

For the research, 87 high school students, including 41 from Jefferson High School in South Los Angeles, wore backpacks equipped with air monitors that measured what each was exposed to throughout the day.

Although outdoor air in both cities is heavily polluted, indoor air was responsible for 40% to 50% of the teenagers' cancer risk from the compounds measured.

The New York and Los Angeles teenagers were the only groups looked at in the study. They were exposed to virtually the same average concentrations of nearly all of the 19 carcinogens examined, according to the research by a Massachusetts consulting firm, Columbia University, UC Davis and the Harvard School of Public Health.

"Given that we spend most of our time indoors, we're really affected by indoor sources. We use a lot of cleaners and we're exposed to off-gassing from furnishings," said Sonja Sax, the study's lead researcher and an associate at Gradient Corp., which specializes in risk science.

"There were two contaminants driving the risk," she said, "and they were mostly coming from indoors."

Formaldehyde - a colorless gas that wafts mostly from particleboard cabinets and shelving, plywood paneling and other pressed-wood furnishings - was the biggest culprit by far, responsible for half of the Los Angeles teenagers' cancer risk.

A chemical called 1,4-dichlorobenzene, used in solid deodorizers and mothballs, also posed a substantial cancer risk. "Some households had very, very high concentrations and others didn't have much at all," Sax said. The researchers suspect that toilet deodorizers were to blame.

Only one outdoor pollutant, benzene, found in car exhaust, contributed significantly to the risk, and much less so than formaldehyde and dichlorobenzene. Although 42% to 48% came from indoor sources, 24% came from outdoor sources. The source of an additional 32% to 36% could not be determined.

The teenagers faced a risk from breathing the chemicals "in the same order of magnitude" as secondhand smoke, according to the study, published online last week in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. In Los Angeles, 513 teenagers per million exposed (equivalent to 1 of every 1,949) could contract cancer from the pollutants, and in New York, 687 per million.

For the Los Angeles teenagers, the researchers reported that the cancer threat was seven times higher than an estimate for the city used by the Environmental Protection Agency, which does not include the effects of indoor air. Most of the chemicals exceeded the 1-in-a-million cancer threat considered acceptable for air pollutants.

Thirteen of the 19 carcinogenic chemicals measured in the study were volatile organic compounds, which are highly evaporative, petroleum-based solvents. Six were metals, which are predominantly found outdoors and posed a much lower cancer risk than the volatile organic compounds.

The study probably underestimated the threat because it did not monitor several dozen other air pollutants linked to cancer, including two major ones, diesel exhaust and gases called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons from vehicles.

Forty-one students at Jefferson High School and 46 New York teenagers, largely from upper Manhattan and the Bronx and attending a west Harlem magnet school, participated in the study, conducted in 1999 and 2000. All were between the ages of 13 and 17 and most lived in apartments. In Los Angeles, all but two were Latino.

The teenagers wore the backpack monitors for 48-hour periods on weekdays, during two seasons. Air samplers were also put in their homes and schools.

All the teenagers spent similar time indoors, on average 22 hours on weekdays. But while the New York teenagers commuted to school from around the city, mostly on subways, the Los

Angeles teenagers lived within a few miles of Jefferson High and had little exposure to exhaust during commutes.

The major difference in the New York and Los Angeles exposures was chloroform, a gas that comes mostly from hot showers and other vaporization of chlorinated water. Its risk was nearly eight times higher for the New York City teenagers than the Los Angeles ones. The reasons are unknown; Sax said it could be differences in doses of chlorine added to water or in quantities of water used in the households.

The New York teenagers also were exposed to slightly more butadiene, from auto exhaust, and perchloroethylene, used in dry cleaning. California has the nation's strictest standards for auto exhaust and the Los Angeles region has regulations limiting drycleaners' perchloroethylene emissions.

Indoor air pollution has long been considered a serious problem. Previous research by the California Air Resources Board and EPA has shown that indoor levels of several pollutants, such as formaldehyde, chloroform and styrene, are two to 50 times higher than outdoor levels.

But state air quality and health officials have little or no power to regulate what is inside homes or schools. For instance, no agency has clear authority to ban formaldehyde in the glues and resins of wood furnishings. Instead, the Air Resources Board has established guidelines for schools to reduce formaldehyde exposure.

"We've been nibbling around the edges of indoor air for some time but as of yet we don't have a lot of authority indoors, nor does anybody else," said air board spokesman Jerry Martin. "We think somebody needs to" have this legal authority "because the average Californian spends 80% of his time indoors."

A bill by Assemblywoman Sally Lieber (D-Mountain View) that would have required the air board to establish air quality guidelines and emission standards for indoor air pollutants was defeated last month amid opposition from business groups.

In the last year, the Legislature has also rejected several bills that would ban certain toxic chemicals in plastics and other household products.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, June 22, 2006:](#)

Ag contributes to air cleanup

A two-pronged effort by state regulators to reduce smog from agricultural sources should make the San Joaquin Valley a healthier place to live.

With the help of growers and manufacturers, the effort should significantly reduce one of the top sources of smog-forming compounds in the San Joaquin Valley one of the smoggiest air basins in the nation.

The state Department of Pesticide Regulation is targeting fumigants -- gases injected into the ground to kill pests -- and volatile organic compounds in chemicals used on the soil or on plants to kill pests and weeds.

Components of the chemicals escape into the air where they react to form ozone, a component of smog.

Although prompted by a lawsuit now being appealed, department director Mary-Ann Warmerdam says the agency will proceed with its pesticide regulations regardless of the appeal's outcome.

The overall goal of a 20 percent reduction in agricultural chemical pollution emissions sounds small, but has a huge effect. It is a matter of tons of emissions per day locally.

The state action is a national precedent. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has not yet set air pollution standards for pesticides.

The department will implement more new rules by next year on the amount of fumigants that can be used, their content and application methods. However, some growers already are altering their procedures.

The second major thrust is to reduce the amount of volatile organic compounds from 700 pesticides and herbicides now in use. The compounds have long since been reduced in non-agricultural chemicals, solvents, inks, paints and other finishes.

The department has ordered manufacturers to submit formulations that have fewer of the volatile organic compounds, which evaporate and react chemically in the atmosphere to produce smog. Products that do not achieve a sufficient reduction could be banned within two years.

In the last two decades, consumers and many industries have made huge gains in pollution control efforts. In the last two or three years, major new rules have been imposed on agriculture, which was largely exempt from past efforts.

Growers and manufacturers have been working with the Department of Pesticide Regulations to develop pollution-cutting rules. For the sake of all who live and breathe in California, continued cooperation is vital.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Thursday, June 22, 2006:](#)

GAVIN: Empty Space exhibit takes jab at city slogan

By CAMILLE GAVIN, contributing columnist

You can count on A.S. Ashley, curator of The Empty Space gallery, to come up with ideas that are thought-provoking. This time it's an art exhibit that takes a poke at the city's latest slogan -- "Bakersfield: Life as It Should Be."

Although some may take offense at the offerings in the exhibit, anyone with a more sophisticated sense of humor will see a strong measure of truth along with the irony. It may not be great art, but it does send a message about the city's problems with [air and water pollution](#), drug abuse, and over-development, along with taking a dig at ultra-conservative attitudes.

On the milder side are Russ Felix's "Bako-nopoly," a Monopoly board overflowing with houses, particularly in the northwest corner; Renee Nelson's "Just the Facts Ma'am," a collage of clippings that includes her written request -- fruitless, as it turns out -- to get a regional agency to look into the impact of biosolids on Kern's underground water; and Jen Raven's "Love One Another," an abstract painting that features rows of same-size boxes except for one in the middle, bulging, misshapen and out of sync.

Among those that are more in your face are Nano Rubio's "Broke Back Bakersfield," a large canvas featuring two cowboys leaning against a pickup truck, their faces "censored" by black rectangular strips. Then there's Adam Cospers's display of a pseudo-meth lab, indicating the production and usage of that particular drug, a situation public officials have acknowledged is rampant in Kern County.

In a lighter vein are such things as "Cow Pie in the Sky," a mobile made up of the real thing, fully dried, of course. Ashley said he collected the objects from a friend's pasture.

The exhibit can be seen at an open house, noon to 7 p.m. Saturday. Admission is \$5.