

Residents urged to 'check' before burning Wood smoke contributes to bad air during winter

By Aaron Swarts

Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, November 3, 2006

The end of summer does not mean the end of efforts to improve air quality in the Central Valley, officials are reminding county residents.

As the temperatures begin to drop, the voluntary "Spare the Air" days, during which people are encouraged to choose public transportation over personal vehicles, are set aside in favor of the "Check Before You Burn" program.

According to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District, the program "helps reduce wintertime air pollution by either discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood fireplaces and pellet and wood stoves when air quality is expected to be at unhealthy levels."

"Wood smoke is one of the largest sources of particulate matter during the winter months," said district representative Anthony Presto. "At up to 24 tons a day, it can represent a third of the particulate matter in the air during the winter months."

Now in its fourth year, "Check Before You Burn" requires Valley residents to check the day's air quality before using their fireplace. If the air quality is deemed unhealthy, then burning any solid fuel is prohibited.

If the air quality is being projected in the "unhealthy for sensitive groups" range, then "burning wood in an open fireplace or older insert is discouraged on a voluntary basis" according to the district.

During the prohibited periods, those found in violation may receive a formal notice and be subjected to fines starting at \$50.

"The program does require some enforcement," Presto said. "But we have had a lot of good cooperation from the public."

There are some exceptions to the no-burn rule.

"The restrictions do not apply to devices fueled exclusively by natural gas or propane; cooking stoves; homes in areas with no natural-gas service; homes at elevations of 3,000 feet or higher; and homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat," according to the air district.

Scott Nester, director of planning for the Air District, said programs like this have an impact on Valley air.

"The public's cooperation truly has helped improve wintertime air quality the past few years," Nester said. "We're confident that the public will do its part for Valley air quality again this winter, and that compliance with the wood-burning restriction will continue to be excellent."

To check the daily air quality residents are asked to call 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) or check online www.valleyair.org.

"Residents can also sign up for daily e-mail notices with the day's air quality rating," Presto said.

County residents can still comment on pollution plan

By Seth Nidever, Sentinel Reporter

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

A plan to cut San Joaquin Valley ozone pollution by nearly 60 percent could affect Kings County residents in a variety of ways, from changing the cars they drive to altering where they live to redirecting their tax dollars.

Concerned residents have until 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to either call the air district with comments or send them by e-mail. Comments should be directed to Air Quality Specialist Jessica Hafer at 230-5800 or Jessica.Hafer@valleyair.org.

Although everybody in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will pay to clean up bad summertime air, people in Hanford don't need it cleaned as badly as some others do.

As it turns out, the sprawling district is more polluted in some parts of the San Joaquin Valley and less polluted in other parts. And Hanford is already one of the cleaner spots when it comes to ozone.

Ozone, the main ingredient in smog, makes it harder to breathe, scars lung tissue and contributes to respiratory problems. Most affected by the pollutant are those already afflicted with asthma or emphysema.

At a public workshop last month, air district officials ranked cities according to how they stack up against a tough new federal ozone standard.

Hanford is third on the list behind Stockton and Modesto. Those two cities are already in compliance with air regulations.

As outlined in the district's plan, a series of regulatory measures including more stringent tailpipe emission standards and tighter controls on businesses -- would bring Hanford into compliance by 2012.

Fresno and Bakersfield wouldn't get there until 2019. The town of Arvin, located southeast of Bakersfield, wouldn't get there at all unless billions of dollars are poured into new technology and cleaner cars.

Even then, district officials don't know whether it would be enough.

Officials don't know exactly why Arvin is such a tough nut to crack but speculate that topography and wind currents have something to do with it. The city is downwind from Bakersfield and jammed up against the inside of a mountainous bowl.

If the city does not meet clean air requirements, the air district as a whole fails.

Enrique Medina Ochoa, Arvin city manager, said in a phone interview that he didn't realize his city was at the bottom of the list for air quality.

All cities and towns in the Valley -- regardless of their individual smog levels -- are responsible for cleaning the overall air quality throughout the Valley.

That's the way the district was set up, according to Tony Barba, the Kings County supervisor who serves on the air district's governing board.

"The object of the thing was to get the whole (region) clean," he said.

The air district estimates that 90 percent of the district's residents will be taking in clean lungfuls by 2019.

Council OKs project to build 'affordable housing'

By Leslie Albrecht

Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, November 7, 2006

The City Council approved plans Monday night to build 124 houses behind Merced Market Place shopping center, reversing an April decision to reject the project.

The council's vote OK'd a zoning switch that converts the site from commercial property to residential property.

Several council members praised Modesto-based developer Pacific Pride Communities for making changes to the project after neighbors and council members voiced concerns in April.

Since then, the developer has reduced the number of houses from 134 to 124, added a new street, and cut down on the number of dead-end cul-de-sacs in the 17-acre development.

Pacific Pride's Scott Montilla said planting ivy along a sound wall on the rear of the property will help prevent graffiti.

"You've taken what was a problematic piece of property behind the Merced (Market Place) and really made a winner out of it," Councilman Jim Sanders said.

The new neighborhood will sit just south of Devonwood Drive between the BNSF railroad tracks and the rear of Merced Market Place.

Council member Michele Gabriault-Acosta cast the lone vote against the new housing, citing the loss of commercial property.

"We don't have enough (commercial property) as it is where a retailer could go right in and not have to get a zoning change," Gabriault-Acosta said after the meeting.

Neighbor Russ Schaff said he liked the project plan, but he thought the council should hold off on approving the new housing until the slow housing market picks up.

"I don't think the city of Merced is ready for this yet until we get rid of some of these homes that are for sale," Schaff said.

Councilman Bill Spriggs called the project a well- designed example of how to fit more houses onto smaller lots, which is one way for the city to provide "affordable housing," he said.

The houses, which will sell for market rate prices, will range in size from a 986- square-foot two-bedroom to a 1,901-square-foot four-bedroom.

Councilman Rick Osorio predicted that the units would sell fast, especially to seniors looking to downsize from bigger houses.

Asbestos dust case settled in El Dorado

By Chris Bowman - Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Prosecutors have reached a \$350,000 settlement with a pair of El Dorado Hills developers and a construction contractor accused of numerous public health offenses in blasting open hillsides that bear a particularly toxic form of asbestos.

Angelo K. Tsakopoulos and Larry Gualco, whose companies form West Valley LLC, and DeSilva Gates Construction of Dublin were accused of but not formally charged with 47 violations of air and water pollution laws based on documented observations by local environmental enforcers, according to Deputy District Attorney Gloria Mas.

The most serious allegations concern the thick dust clouds from explosions in areas the county had designated as known or likely to contain naturally occurring asbestos, Marcella McTaggart, head of the El Dorado County Air Quality Management District, said after signing the settlement Friday.

Left alone, asbestos poses no risk. Blasting, drilling and bulldozing, however, churns it up and releases its tiny fibers into the air. Breathable-sized fibers can lodge in the lungs, setting the stage decades later for debilitating, if not fatal, respiratory disease.

Air district inspectors photographed many of the explosions and issued several warnings in the past two years as excavators carved out building pads and roads for the 1,400-home Valley View subdivision south of Highway 50, air district records show.

In several instances, the thick dust clouds drifted far beyond the job site, "vastly" exceeding the permitted limit, according to the air district.

One of the most spectacular explosions in a designated asbestos area occurred Dec. 15, two days after West Valley's geologist reported his first asbestos find on the 982-acre property.

A contractor detonated 27,245 pounds of explosives, dislodging 28,000-plus cubic yards of shattered rock and dirt. A photo of it "was a screen saver for a lot of people here," said McTaggart, who created a computerized slide show of excavators' blasts as evidence. Spokesmen for West Valley said the development company went to extraordinary lengths to reduce dust and mud that construction vehicles had tracked onto public streets.

"These and other measures being implemented will ensure not only that there will be no future violations, but that the ... project is constructed so as to minimize the impacts on the project's neighbors and the El Dorado community," said John Poulos, a Sacramento attorney for West Valley.

West Valley and its contractors made no admission or denial of liability in the settlement.

West Valley is composed of Lennar Communities Inc. of Roseville, headed by Gualco, and Tsakopoulos' AKT Investments Inc. of Sacramento. Lennar manages the West Valley development, and AKT is the investor, according to spokesmen for the companies.

"AKT is monitoring the West Valley situation closely but is convinced that Lennar would not intentionally break the law," spokesman Chris Holben said Saturday.

Under terms of the settlement, the county district attorney and air district agreed not to pursue any of the violations.

According to the air district, the development company also violated county restrictions on construction dust in general as well as state limits on sediment runoff from construction sites into streams -- in this case, a tributary of Carson Creek.

The county agreed at the behest of the developers to make West Valley's earthmoving contractor, DeSilva Gates, solely responsible for the settlement payments, according to Mas, who negotiated the deal. "That was the arrangement made by the responsible parties," Mas said.

The settlement divides the \$350,000 among the county air district, the District Attorney's Office and the California District Attorneys Association's environmental circuit prosecution project, which assists rural counties. In calculating the total amount, prosecutors assigned the highest payments per violation to those involving asbestos dust, Mas said.

"Our county Board of Supervisors took a position of zero tolerance on construction-dust violations in areas of naturally occurring asbestos," Mas said.

While many areas of California contain asbestos, none poses as great a potential hazard as the fast-growing Sierra foothills near the El Dorado-Sacramento county line, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which has conducted asbestos tests in the region and elsewhere in the state.

Belts of rocks and soil known to contain asbestos lie in the path of large housing developments, and much of the region's asbestos is a highly toxic form of the fibrous minerals, called amphibole.

El Dorado Hills' dense residential development and its many young families increase the potential health risk, EPA scientists say. Children are especially at risk because of their long life expectancy.

The land being excavated for the future Valley View homes contains pockets of amphibole asbestos. It borders busy Latrobe Road.

Poulos said West Valley did not detect asbestos in any soil samples taken at sites where blast dust allegedly exceeded regulatory limits. Mas said, however, that the developers' geologist

found asbestos in the same construction unit where the blasting took place -- enough evidence to assert that violations had occurred.

An apartment complex is within a few hundred feet of the construction site, and the El Dorado Hills Business Park, which houses two day-care centers, is opposite the earthmovers' entrance and exit.

Scientists say there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos. And no study has been conducted in the region to determine to what extent, if any, the hazardous dust has caused injury or death.

El Dorado County, nonetheless, requires special dust-suppression measures, such as heavy watering for construction in areas known or likely to contain asbestos.

The "asbestos hazard dust mitigation plan" approved for the Valley View project called for certain dust-cutting measures in blasting operations, such as smaller and fewer bore holes for explosives and detonation delays between the holes.

McTaggart said the development company and its contractor all too often failed to abide by the plan.

"The blasts ... show no improvement in your efforts to control the release of fugitive emissions," McTaggart said in a letter to Lennar Communities following the huge Dec. 15 explosion.

"We were very disappointed to note that the agreed-upon measures to minimize ... dust were completely disregarded by your company."

MID to ad wood as energy source

Power will be produced by burning construction scrap

By TIM MORAN

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Burning wood for energy sounds like a winter strategy, but the Modesto Irrigation District will be buying electricity made from burning wood to cool homes in the summer.

The MID has agreed to buy up to 15 megawatts of power from a proposed steam-turbine generator near Jackson that will run on municipal wood waste.

Municipal wood waste includes construction scrap wood and tree trimmings. A megawatt is enough energy to power 300 homes in Modesto in the summer or 1,000 homes in the winter.

The power comes from the Buena Vista Renewable Biomass Project, a privately owned venture that is converting an idle low-energy coal plant to burn wood.

The project needs permits from the California Energy Commission and the air pollution control district, said Kate Hora, a spokeswoman for the MID. Buena Vista hopes to have those permits by the end of next March, she said.

Construction to convert the plant would start in the following months, with electricity production starting in 2008, according to Hora.

The MID has agreed to buy all of the plant's output for 15 years, at a cost of up to \$133 million.

The power will be more expensive than conventional natural gas turbine power, Hora said, but will help the MID reach the state-mandated goal of providing 20 percent of its electricity from renewable resources by 2010.

As of January, 11 percent of the MID's power will be renewable. That power comes from contracts MID has signed to buy wind power, Hora said.

The Buena Vista power purchase would bring the irrigation district's renewable power up to 16 percent.

The state doesn't consider large hydroelectric plants, such as the Don Pedro Dam turbines that provide 5 percent to 12 percent of MID's power, renewable resources.

In addition to wind and hydroelectric, the irrigation district's power comes from natural gas and coal plants.

Harnessed power from the Tuolumne River irrigation systems caused the MID to get into the electricity business more than 80 years ago. but once the plant goes on line in 2008, wind and bio-mass will provide more power to the MID than Don Pedro, Hora noted.

Diesel trucks target of port plan

The Los Angeles and Long Beach facilities want all of the vehicles replaced as part of an effort to cut pollution in the harbor area by 45%.

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer
L.A. Times, November 7, 2006

The entire fleet of aging diesel trucks that are a leading cause of unhealthful air around the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach would be replaced, possibly at industry cost, according to the final draft of a \$2-billion plan to reduce pollution from ships, trains, terminal equipment and harbor craft by 45%.

The trucks, many owned and operated by low-income immigrant workers, would be replaced within five years, at industry expense if necessary, according to the draft released late Monday. The port commissions are scheduled to vote on adoption of the plan Nov. 20.

The ports will explore the use of pollution-based impact fees, such as gate fees assessed on 'dirty' trucks, so that polluters pay their part to improve air quality," Long Beach officials said in a statement. "The ports will develop tariff-based incentives and requirements, such as vessel speed reduction incentives and port-mandated fuel requirements, to curb harmful air emissions."

But Geraldine Knatz, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said the plan would not target the truck drivers, who are on the bottom rung of the multibillion-dollar cargo industry at the two ports, the nation's busiest.

"We're not talking about placing fees on the truckers, but we are going to be exploring ways to collect revenue to replace those 16,000 aging vehicles," Knatz said.

The plan also calls for increased use of electricity to power international marine vessels at dock, rather than leaving dirty engines idling, and for improved emission standards in the harbor area to reduce health risks posed by air pollution from port-related activities.

"We listened to the community and made very significant revisions," Richard Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach, said in a statement. "This plan will help us to make these the world's greenest, most environmentally friendly seaports."

While declining to offer specifics, Knatz said fees or tariffs would probably be imposed, possibly on import companies or retail giants such as Wal-Mart, and possibly in a manner similar to the existing PierPass program, which allows night shifts at the busy docks if extra fees are paid per container of goods.

More than 40% of all retail goods imported to the United States are shipped through the two fast-growing ports. That activity has made the ports the largest contributor to smog from diesel engines in the Los Angeles Basin, according to regulators.

Studies have shown that diesel exhaust causes cancer and is responsible for 70% of pollution-related health problems and hundreds of deaths annually in the Los Angeles region.

The amount of goods moved through the two ports has more than doubled in recent years. But legal challenges from environmentalists and air-quality regulators have dogged port officials as they sought to expand or build piers.

The first draft of the plan, released in June, generated hundreds of public comments, which the ports made public for the first time Monday.

Calls to the California Trucking Assn. and the Teamsters union about the truck replacement program were not returned.

Port officials said they are hopeful that a bond measure contained in Proposition 1B on today's ballot for infrastructure replacement will pass, and that a large portion of the \$1 billion set aside for air-quality improvements could be used for replacing trucks.

The plan is to be voted on at a special joint meeting of the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbor commission boards.

Plan aims to reduce pollution at busy LA and Long Beach ports

In the S.F. Chronicle and Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Los Angeles (AP) -- A \$2 billion plan to dramatically reduce pollution at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach calls for replacing an aging fleet of diesel trucks and improving emission standards in the harbor areas.

The trucks would be replaced within five years, possibly at industry cost, according to a draft of the proposal released Monday.

"The ports will explore the use of pollution-based impact fees, such as gate fees assessed on 'dirty' trucks, so that polluters pay their part to improve air quality," Long Beach officials said in a statement.

The trucks, many owned and operated by low-income immigrant workers, are a leading cause of unhealthy air around the ports. The plan, which the ports commissions were scheduled to vote on Nov. 20, aims to reduce pollution from ships, trains, terminal equipment and harbor craft by 45 percent.

"The ports will develop tariff-based incentives and requirements, such as vessel speed reduction incentives and port-mandated fuel requirements, to curb harmful air emissions," the statement said.

Geraldine Knatz, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said the plan would not target the truck drivers.

"We're not talking about placing fees on the truckers, but we are going to be exploring ways to collect revenue to replace those 16,000 aging vehicles," Knatz said.

The proposal also endorsed using electricity to power international marine vessels at dock, rather than leaving engines idling.

"This plan will help us to make these the world's greenest, most environmentally friendly seaports," Richard Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach, said in a statement.

Activity at the busy ports has made them the largest contributor to smog from diesel engines in the Los Angeles Basin, according to regulators.

Calls to the California Trucking Association and the Teamsters union about the truck replacement program were not returned.

Los Angeles area ports revamp proposed air pollution plan

The Associated Press

in the Sacramento Bee and Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Officials at the nation's largest port complex said Monday they have revised their proposed plan to cut air pollution from trucks, ships and cargo-handling equipment.

The five-year plan would reduce pollutants at the Long Beach and Los Angeles harbors by at least 45 percent. Since disclosing the proposal in June, the ports have received recommendations for changes from the public and regulatory agencies.

Among the slate of changes, the ports have agreed to consider assessing fees on polluters, such as trucks that fail to meet pollution standards.

Port officials also hope to curb harmful emissions by requiring the use of cleaner fuels at the ports and mandating ships reduce speed or face possible fees.

The revised plan also establishes provisions to track air quality improvements.

The Port of Long Beach has also agreed to offer electricity for ships at up to 16 of its berths within five years. The Port of Los Angeles had previously committed to making shore-side electricity available at 15 berths within the same time frame.

"We listened to the community and made very significant revisions," said Richard Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach. "This plan will help us to make these the world's greenest, most environmentally friendly seaports."

The Los Angeles and Long Beach boards of harbor commissioners are expected to vote on the final version of the plan on Nov. 20.

China to Pass U.S. in 2009 in Emissions

By Keith Bradsher, N.Y. Times

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

LONDON - China will surpass the United States in 2009, nearly a decade ahead of previous predictions, as the biggest emitter of the main gas linked to global warming, the International Energy Agency has concluded in a report to be released Tuesday.

China's rise, fueled heavily by coal, is particularly troubling to climate scientists because as a developing country, China is exempt from the Kyoto Protocol's requirements for reductions in emissions of global warming gases. Unregulated emissions from China, India and other developing countries are likely to account for most of the global increase in carbon dioxide emissions over the next quarter-century.

The agency's prediction highlights the unexpected speed with which China is emerging as the biggest contributor to global warming. Still, China has resisted limits on its own emissions and those of other developing countries.

Up until now, Chinese officials have instead called repeatedly for even tighter limits on the industrialized countries' emissions of global warming gases after the Kyoto Protocol's limits expire at the end of 2012. China says rich countries bear responsibility for the increase in global carbon dioxide levels that has already taken place.

Moreover, the biggest current emitter of the gases, the United States, has rejected the protocol in part because most lawmakers and President Bush say its exemption for rising powers like China is unfair.

"You cannot tell people who are struggling to earn enough to eat that they need to reduce their emissions," said Lu Xuedu, the deputy director general of Chinese Office of Global Environmental Affairs, at a conference two weeks ago.

Chinese officials did not respond to attempts by phone and fax to obtain a response to the agency's forecast.

The energy agency also issued a sharp exhortation to all oil-consuming countries to rapidly curb their consumption or face higher prices and severe environmental damage, including changes in the global climate. But the agency acknowledged that any conservation would require a

“considerable political push” from Western governments, as well as large developing economies like China and India, to reduce their use of hydrocarbons, including coal.

If nothing is done, global energy demand is projected to grow 53 percent by 2030, the energy agency said. Oil consumption is seen jumping to 116 million barrels a day, compared with 85 million barrels now, mostly because of increased oil consumption in developing countries.

Demand for coal, mostly for power generation, will rise 59 percent. As a result, energy-related carbon dioxide emissions will increase 55 percent, to 44.1 billion tons in 2030.

Environmental officials from around the world began meeting Monday in Nairobi to discuss a new agreement after the Kyoto Protocol. The talks, which are not expected to produce an agreement for at least a couple of years, are aimed partly at bringing the larger developing countries like China, India and Brazil under emission controls.

Developing countries have been wary of a deal. In addition to the United States, Australia has rejected the Kyoto Protocol, while Canada and Western European countries have found that their emissions have risen since 1990, instead of falling as the agreement required. The rise is particularly notable since 2000, according to fresh United Nations data.

Among developing countries, “there has been a loss of confidence, if I may say, since the developed countries, and particularly the largest ones, have not done more,” said Rajendra K. Pachauri, India’s best-known energy expert and the chairman of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

“They’re going to shift the burden on us - that’s the popular view,” he said in a phone interview from New Delhi before flying to Nairobi.

The agency advocates improving the fuel efficiency of cars, expanding the use of nuclear power and financing biofuels research. It said those measures would more than pay for themselves by reducing oil imports.

“If we stick with business-as-usual policies, we are ending up with a world which is vulnerable, dirty and expensive,” Fatih Birol, the agency’s chief economist, said in an interview.

Investments needed to meet world growth in demand by 2030 are in the order of \$20 trillion, the report estimated. But aggressive energy conservation policies could limit the increased oil demand to 103 million barrels a day by 2030. If that was done, carbon dioxide emissions would be 16 percent lower.

China has taken steps to improve energy conservation, though it has justified them mainly in terms of limiting reliance on imported oil and reducing air pollution. China has set fuel-economy requirements for new cars that are more stringent than the United States’, but less stringent than the European Union’s.

China has also begun requiring power companies to invest in larger coal-fired power plants instead of smaller power plants, which tend to require more coal per kilowatt-hour generated.

The energy agency took these steps into account in its prediction that China’s carbon dioxide emissions would overtake those of the United States some time in 2009.

Mr. Birol said consumer nations would face even greater risks to their supplies because of their growing reliance on energy imports from a smaller number of countries, mainly in the Middle East. Domestic oil production in Western countries will peak in the next five or six years and then decline.

Worldwide coal consumption has risen as much in the last three years as it had in the previous 23 years, Mr. Birol said. China accounts for 90 percent of the increase, the result of steeply rising demand for electricity that is mostly generated by coal-fired power plants.

India is responsible for about 8 percent of the increase in coal use, and the United States for most of the rest, Mr. Birol said. The agency’s forecast of China’s carbon dioxide emissions also reflects

a revised prediction that China's economy will grow 5.5 percent a year over the next quarter-century, slightly higher than previously expected, which will result in higher energy use.

"Strong policy action is needed to move the world onto a more sustainable growth path," the agency said in a statement with the report.

Carbon dioxide accounts for 80 percent of the world's manmade emissions of global warming gases. A variety of gases from industrial processes, plus methane from landfills and coal mines, account for the rest of these emissions; China's emissions of those gases is growing rapidly as well.

The global warming effects of China's rapidly increasing carbon dioxide emissions may have been masked until now by the country's high emissions of sulfur compounds, which form particles that reflect the sun's rays back into space. But the particles do not stay in the air nearly as long as the carbon dioxide, and China is now trying to reduce sulfur compounds because they cause acid rain and respiratory problems.

"Like the tortoise versus the hare, the carbon dioxide wins out in the long run," said Stephen E. Schwartz, a senior atmospheric scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, N.Y.

China is not alone in relying more on coal. The United States is counting on coal to fill its growing energy needs. And while Western European nations have been the most enthusiastic advocates of measures to address global warming, they have also started moving back to coal.

Britain has reopened several coal-fired power plants and imported coal lately because generating electricity from coal is much cheaper now than using oil or natural gas. Japan and Germany have both embarked on ambitious construction programs for new coal-fired plants as well.

A British government spokesman acknowledged that British coal consumption was rising, but noted that British coal users were offsetting the increase in carbon dioxide emissions by paying energy users elsewhere in the European Union to cut emissions.

But critics of this carbon trading plan say that European countries have estimated existing carbon dioxide emissions so high that it is easy for companies to come in below those levels and then declare that they have reduced emissions and therefore have credits to sell.

Myron Ebell, the director of energy and global warming policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a research group in Washington that is critical of limits on global warming emissions and receives financing from energy companies, said China's rapid rise would further hurt international efforts to rein in global warming gases.

"It's not just China that's blowing this thing apart," he said. "I don't see the Europeans cutting their emissions at all."

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Tuesday, November 7, 2006:](#)

'Less foreign oil'

Will Proposition 87 create a huge bureaucracy? The oil companies want you to think so. But apparently the oil company executives funding the anti-87 campaign have not read the initiative. The fact is, Proposition 87 reinvigorates an existing state agency, creating no new bureaucracy. The agency will consist of environmental, energy, business and public health experts.

All funding decisions will be made through a competitive process; with mandatory audits by independent CPAs, reviews by the state Controller, and by an independent citizens financial oversight committee.

Don't believe the oil companies. Proposition 87 means less foreign oil and cleaner air. It's that simple.

Brian Cohen , Fresno