

Money available to clean up fireplaces

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2008

San Joaquin Valley residents can get \$350 to help replace polluting woodstoves and fireplace inserts with cleaner models, according to the regional air district.

People in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District can apply for vouchers that can be used to buy natural gas or propane stoves and fireplace inserts.

The program, sponsored by the nonprofit Operation Clean Air and the air district, will continue on a first-come, first-served basis until April 30, or until funds are gone.

Application forms and supporting materials are available at www.valleyair.org and the district office, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave. For more information, call the district office at (559) 230-6000.

Incentives offered to help clean air

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, February 5, 2008

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is offering incentives for people to trade in their wood stoves and fireplace inserts for cleaner burning models. People in the eight-county district can apply for \$350 vouchers toward the purchase of natural gas or propane stoves or inserts. Applications are available and will be accepted through April 30, or until the \$108,000 fund is depleted. Applicants must be full-time residents of a county within the air district, such as Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced. Application forms are available at www.valleyair.org or at 4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto, or call 557-6400.

Replace that wood-burning fireplace insert

By GERALD CARROLL

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2008

For the second year, Valley residents who replace wood-burning fireplace inserts with those using cleaner-burning natural gas will be eligible for \$350 rebates, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials announced Monday.

Wood-burning fireplaces and inserts generate enormous air pollution in the Valley, district spokeswoman Janelle Schneider said. Converting to natural gas is "a big step toward cleaner air," Schneider said.

But the number of rebate-offering dealers has dropped from 31 last year to 13 this time around, she said. Buckstove Fan and Spa, 830 W. Caldwell Ave., is the only Visalia fireplace-insert seller involved in the program.

Buckstove sold 20-25 inserts through the program last year, sales manager Kristi Rice said.

"We're all geared up [to do it again]," she said.

Benefits

A home can be heated for 40 cents per hour with a natural-gas insert - compared to more than \$1.50 per hour with a wood or conventional furnaces, Rice said.

"[Natural gas] not only helps make air cleaner," she said, "it's far less expensive."

The average cost for an insert is about \$2,500, Rice said.

But the \$350 rebate, combined with a \$200 discount offered by the store and \$75 more from the manufacturer, makes it more affordable.

"It costs an average of around \$1,900 including tax, installation and everything," Rice said.

But Shawn Ogletree, newly appointed manager of Visalia's Department of Natural Resource Conservation, said the program should be expanded. Its \$108,000 budget - funded by a grant from Operation Clean Air - covers only 300 replacements for an eight-county region, he said.

Ogletree said he hopes Visalia can establish its own fireplace-insert replacement program, modeled after the district's plan.

"We're already going after grants to do just that," Ogletree said.

How to Apply

To apply for a \$350 rebate to replace your wood-burning fireplace insert with one that burns less-polluting natural gas, go to www.valleyair.org. Click on to "Programs" at lower left, then "Burn Cleaner/Woodstove," then "Application for Voucher." Print it out, fill it out and mail it in, and you will receive a voucher you can present to a participating dealer.

Local Dealer

Only one dealer in Visalia, Buckstove Fan and Spa, participates in the program. Buckstove is located at 830 W. Caldwell Ave., Visalia, 627-2205.

EPA error prompts judge to stop dairy case

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Feb. 5 2008

A federal judge temporarily halted a case against a Kern County dairy Monday after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it erred in a decision that caused the dairy to be sued.

EPA officials said they were wrong to approve pollution rules for San Joaquin Valley farms in 2004 that were stricter than those passed in a state law the same year.

That mistake resulted in a September ruling by federal Judge Oliver Wanger against the dairy for violating the Clean Air Act, an attorney for the C&R Vanderham Dairy in Shafter said.

The 1,300-cow dairy is exempt from regulations under the state law but would be regulated under the valley rules for farms approved by EPA.

Wanger based his decision on the valley regulations.

"EPA has admitted it made a mistake and the judge's decision was based on that mistake so we need to let this work itself out," said Bakersfield attorney and dairyman David Albers, who represents the Vanderham family.

An attorney for the environmental group that sued the dairy said EPA's reversal is an attempt to protect the dairy. The EPA can't relax the valley rules, said Brent Newell, an attorney representing the Shafter-based environmental group Association of Irrigated Residents.

If that happens, Newell said his clients plan to challenge EPA's decision to roll back the farm regulations in court.

"They're allowing agriculture to receive special treatment again and be subject to less stringent standards than all other sources," he said.

EPA has issued a public notice that it intends to change San Joaquin Valley rules for farms to bring them in line with state law.

The law, known as SB 700, was authored by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and took effect in 2004. It was notable because it repealed a long-standing provision that exempted the California agriculture industry from air pollution regulations.

Rubio optimistic despite 'storm'

By Doug Keeler, Midway Driller Editor
Taft Midway Driller, Friday, Feb. 1, 2008

Kern County is facing a growing budget squeeze.

While demands for local services keep increasing, state funding is being cut, and signs of a worsening economy only make matters worse.

The county, in fact, is facing a “looming storm,” in the words of Kern County Board of Supervisors Chairman David Rubio.

But the youngest member of board of supervisors is undaunted. He feels the county is going to be able to withstand any coming crisis.

Rubio spoke Monday night at the annual State of the County dinner at the Holiday Inn Select in Bakersfield.

The City of Taft was well represented at the dinner. City Councilman Cliff Thompson and City manager Bob Gorson were joined by City Clerk Louise Hudgens, Grants Administrator Bud Rice, new Public Works Director Marty Jones, Planner Eddie Quintero and GIS coordinator Bud Rice

Rubio, 30, was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2004, becoming the youngest county supervisor in the state.

He spoke to several hundred business and local government leaders in the 10th annual State of the County event, which was a dinner for the first time this year after being held as a breakfast in prior years.

His address covered a number of topics but centered on the county's ongoing efforts to provide more and more services as events combine in a perfect storm that will cut tax revenues as the demand for services keeps increasing.

“How will that storm be kept at bay?” Rubio asked.

Part of the answer comes from \$48.2 million in reserves, Rubio said, but the rest of the answer lies with people and ideas.

He cited four examples.

- The people in county government. The county has given raises totaling tens of millions of dollars to county employees. “After all, county employees, particularly our frontline workers, are the backbone of our commitment to public service,” Rubio said.

New leadership from 10 new department heads hired in the past three years has brought “infectious renewed energy” to county government.

He singled out Matt Constantine, director of the Department of Environmental Health Services.

“...Let it be clear there is a new Sheriff in town and his name is Matt Constantine,” Rubio said. “Matt has issued over 20,000 environmental health inspections and cracked down on polluting industries like we've never seen before.”

- A commitment by the county to battle gang problems. Millions of dollars have been spent and more allocated. In conjunction with Bakersfield, the county has seen a 50 percent drop in gang-related killings.
- Nearly \$200 million in bonds to pay for infrastructure improvements and repairs. That money is in addition to transportation impact fees on new residential construction to augment money available for transportation projects. Just a few years ago, levying such fees in Kern County would have been controversial, Rubio said. “Times are indeed changing.”
- Ongoing cooperation between the county government and the people of the county.

“Kern's citizens will have a government that is accessible, that is accountable - but most importantly takes action on their part.”

Rubio also spoke about Kern Medical Center. The financially troubled facility offers the regions only trauma center. State and federal funding cuts threaten its future existence, he warned, but Rubio spoke of its value to the people.

But he also noted that Kern County is ranked 49th out of the state's 58 counties in the number of families with no insurance.

Rubio also spoke about the threat that poor air quality poses to the region.

Rubio was an aide to state Sen. Dean Florez before becoming a supervisor, and Florez has long fought for stricter air standards.

Voluntary carbon offset industry sparks debate **Unregulated market lets polluters skate, critics say**

By John Simerman, STAFF WRITER
Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Angie Schiavoni recycles. She composts and screws in low-energy light bulbs. She grew up with "hippie" parents and drank the green tea.

But when it came time to buy a car, a hybrid was out of reach.

"I've always tried to do what I can, but I'm not perfect," says Schiavoni, who lives in San Francisco.

So last week she went online to the small nonprofit LiveNeutral, calculated the greenhouse gas "footprint" from her Honda Accord, then paid \$22 for 3 metric tons of someone else's emissions reduction to cover her for a year.

Sen. Jim Battin did the same, tongue buried in cheek after the Times reported him dead last in the Legislature for fuel efficiency in his state-owned Lincoln Aviator. Battin,

R-Palm Desert, paid \$45 for six metric tons of carbon offsets. LiveNeutral mailed him a sticker.

"Yep, that's right, no more guilt for me, and you can't even criticize me for driving my Aviator ... because I'm carbon neutral," he wrote in a recent blog. "So there."

Such is the give-and-take around a young, fast-growing market for an unregulated product that never arrives at the door and has drawn criticism for letting polluters off too cheaply, and sometimes falsely.

The voluntary market for carbon offsets and credits has grown from almost nothing five years ago to \$91 million in 2006 and likely more than \$200 million in 2007, according to Ecosystem Marketplace estimates. Some analysts see it nearing

\$4 billion within three years.

Growing along with it is a heated debate among climate experts, environmentalists and policy makers over the true measure of emissions reductions from projects sold as squeaky green; the potential for fraud; and whether government standards would help.

It works like this: A slew of for-profit and nonprofit firms offer to direct your money to projects that contain methane from landfills or farms, build solar or wind projects, plant trees at home or in the tropics - or pay timber companies not to fell them.

Or, like LiveNeutral, they buy offsets from the Chicago Climate Exchange, whose members include corporations, colleges and other entities that have agreed to lower their emissions by set amounts. Their credits fetch a price - now about \$2.50 a ton.

Over the last year or two, carbon offsets have gone mainstream.

Travel Web sites now allow customers to pay extra to offset their flights. Utilities such as PG&E do the same for energy use.

Google, Yahoo! and Nike all buy carbon offsets. The House of Representatives does, too. The Rolling Stones paid to offset a high-octane concert tour. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger pledged to offset his travel.

Last year, a NASCAR Busch series sponsor boasted the first ever "carbon neutral" stock car race.

On Web sites with names such as Carbonfund.org, TerraPass and MyClimate.com, the cost ranges from less than \$50 to more than \$200 for a car that travels 20,000 miles at 20 mpg.

So how do you know what you buy equates to stuffing every gasp of CO₂ back up your tailpipe?

Though most of the projects are environmental pluses, tracing your purchase and figuring its impact can be tough, said Michael Gillenwater, a Princeton University research specialist.

"It's just damn complicated," he said. "If I was to go out and buy offsets, I'd have to do some serious homework. It's infeasible to expect your average consumer to do a tenth of that."

At the heart of the problem is knowing if a project would have happened anyway, without the offsets.

Or, in the case of planting trees, just how long it will take. What if your carbon-neutralizing grove burns down or fails to grow?

Many experts point to a host of standards, including those under the Kyoto Protocol, and third-party auditors who certify that projects meet them. Environmental groups police them, and there is little sign of snake oil in the industry, they say.

Concerns that companies are, for instance, selling the same offsets to different people appear overblown, said Gillenwater.

Daniel Kammen, a professor of energy resources at the University of California, Berkeley, buys carbon offsets and thinks those that are audited and follow solid standards are worth it - but not to absolve guilt.

"Some people are thinking about offsets as the way to do climate change. That's really wrong," said Kammen. "It's like saying I'm going to go to McDonalds and eat this hamburger and order a Diet Coke and ask a person in Costa Rica to drink the Diet Coke for me."

Several experts said federal regulations would be ideal, but do not seem near.

One California lawmaker took a step last week to fill the void. A bill authored by Assemblyman Pedro Nava, D-Santa Barbara, would create a state seal of approval for carbon offset retailers.

"Consumers should know the value of what they're buying and right now they just don't," said Nava.

"Tomorrow I could set up one of these companies, and with an appealing enough Web site we could charge 70, 80 percent overhead."

TerraPass, a large, for-profit company, would not reveal any financial information. Customers buy into a portfolio of clean energy, methane reduction projects and others. TerraPass claims to have offset more than 700 million pounds of carbon, at least two-thirds of that in 2007.

LiveNeutral, a smaller, San Francisco-based firm built under the Presidio School of Management, has not yet filed any tax documents. But, based on Chicago Climate Exchange price data, it charged Battin \$45 for offsets that cost \$13.50.

Jenna Carl, executive director of LiveNeutral said the firm runs lean and could not constantly adjust its pricing based on fluctuations in the Chicago exchange.

"I get less markup when I buy gas from Exxon," the Senator cracked.

Battin, who calls the debate over man's role in global warming "wide open," had another aim with his purchase.

He slammed both Schwarzenegger, for his jet travel habits, and former Vice President Al Gore, who has faced criticism over his heavy energy use and purchase of offsets through a firm he co-founded.

"It's hypocritical," said Battin.

He also said he would push a bill to let people who buy carbon offsets to join hybrid drivers in freeway carpool lanes.

"I'm thinking if those polluting Prius drivers can be in the carpool lanes, anybody who's carbon-neutral should be able to do that, too."

One climate modeler sees potential pitfalls from voluntary offsets.

"All of these offsets allow us not to grapple with the real problem. It's active denial, that we don't really have to get off CO2 emissions," said Ken Caldeira, of the Carnegie Institution's global ecology department.

Offset retailers respond by saying the market is spurring awareness of consumption while building incentives for green projects.

"Any sort of personal responsibility for carbon emissions is huge," said Carl, of LiveNeutral. "You have to reach people where they are."

Even, she said, if that's behind the wheel of a gas guzzler.

Students find high lead levels in classroom

Jill Tucker, Chronicle Staff Writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, February 5, 2008

At first, the East Oakland class project on local air quality was a lot like other schoolwork - science and math and writing up stuff.

Then it got personal.

The classroom samples taken by the 20 Excel High School students came back from the lab showing high levels of lead - a dangerous metal known to cause a wide range of neurological and developmental problems, with small children most at risk.

In announcing the results Monday at the school, the students and their advisers said one of the tests showed levels at least five times above the federal Environmental Protection Agency standards for an indoor windowsill.

Those levels could be up to 54 times higher than EPA standards for indoor samples, said Denny Larson of the Global Community Monitor, a San Francisco-based nonprofit group that promotes community involvement in environmental issues. The group sponsored the testing and helped train the students.

"It was devastating when we got our test results back," said 15-year-old Terranisha Nathaniel.

The students collected two samples in November, following scientific procedure as they prepared the plate that would sit undisturbed on a classroom shelf for a week with the window sometimes opened during the day.

The students then swiped the fallout and sent the samples to a EPA-accredited lab.

The method produced preliminary results showing the presence of lead. But it isn't considered reliable for measuring quantities of the dangerous metal in the air or surface areas at the school, said Karen Schkolnick, spokeswoman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

It also doesn't provide any information as to where the lead came from, she added.

While lead is rarely used in industrial processes now, the metal remains in soil, cars and homes. Urban areas are especially prone, given traffic and current or past industry.

Other than accumulated lead in buildings and soil, the largest current source of the metal is from piston-engine aircraft - small propeller planes, Schkolnick said.

Such local testing, sometimes called community monitoring, is becoming more common, said Shana Lazerow, staff attorney for Communities for a Better Environment, a California environmental activist group.

"It's very, very important from a community empowerment perspective," she said.

Students at Excel - formerly McClymonds High School - said they feel empowered and have already asked Schkolnick's agency to give them a more sophisticated air-quality monitor they could use to do more extensive testing. That request is under review, the spokeswoman said.

The teens want to do the testing themselves, said their legal studies teacher, Ina Bendich.

"Students want to be involved in that testing," she said. "They want to be a part of it."

The math and the science are a means to an end now for the students, who are enthusiastic and becoming more involved and invested in the health and safety of their community, she added. "This is something people don't think about in everyday life," Terranisha said. "This pollution falls on their homes and gets in their kids' system and their own too, and it shortens lives. People should know this is very serious."

New rule says shopkeepers must replace polluting older equipment with costly 'green' alternatives

By Ngoc Nguyen

Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, February 5, 2008

The morning calm hit Ryan and Samantha Vanausdall hard. They had planned to auction off their Elkhorn Cleaners shop to hundreds of invited dry cleaners.

"Honestly, I didn't think we would get no one here. It's 9:15, no one showed up. The auction's over," said Ryan, hanging his restless hands on a garment rack.

Buyers aren't lining up for his machines.

That's in part because the single most important piece of equipment in the place - a dryer that uses a common dry-cleaning fluid called perc - is about to become obsolete.

Under a rule approved in 2007 by the California Air Resources Board, machines that use perc (perchloroethylene) are no longer allowed to be sold in the state.

Hailed as a strong step toward cleaning up the state's environment, the rule means that within 2 1/2 years, businesses like the Vanausdalls' will have to replace perc-driven machines more than 15 years old with expensive "greener" alternatives.

The phase-out of existing dryers is keyed to the age of the machines, said Peter Sinsheimer, director of the Pollution Prevention Center at Occidental College. By July 2010, older dryers or those located in buildings with residences must be replaced. By 2023 they all must be phased out.

During years of unregulated use, perc contaminated groundwater. Concerned with health problems associated with the chemical - which can cause cancer and damage the liver and kidney - the state enacted regulations to reduce perc emissions by 70 percent.

Yet, according to a state Air Resources Board report, more than 70 percent of dry cleaners in the state still use perc in their dryers.

Air board spokesman Dimitri Stanich said perc's phase-out is warranted because there are better alternatives.

The state is offering \$10,000 to dry cleaners as an incentive to make the transition to non-toxic and non-smog-forming alternatives such as water-based or carbon dioxide cleaning systems.

Lawrence Lim of the Korean Dry Cleaners Association of Northern California said the money is helpful but "not enough."

So-called "wet-cleaning" equipment costs at least \$45,000, compared with \$25,000 for a perc machine.

Lim, who still uses perc in his Concord-based dry-cleaning business, said many dry cleaners in his group spent up to \$100,000 switching to a hydrocarbon, or petroleum-based cleaning system, only to be faced with the possibility of another forced switch.

Hydrocarbons form ozone, which is linked to respiratory irritation, asthma and premature death.

"We're waiting for the better alternative," Lim said. "We know hydrocarbon is not the best option."

So far, about 21 percent of dry cleaners have opted for the hydrocarbon system - by far the most popular alternative among dry cleaners.

Sinsheimer said one of the reasons the hydrocarbon process has a leg up in the market is because "existing distributors of dry-cleaning machines are also distributing petroleum machines." Another reason is that the operators are comfortable with hydrocarbon-driven dryers, which resemble the old perc machines, he said.

Sinsheimer has been advocating wet-cleaning, which allows dry-clean-only clothes to be washed with water, detergents and finishing equipment.

It's simpler and greener, Sinsheimer said, but dry cleaners see water "as the enemy."

A.L. Daniel, owner of Alhambra One Hour Cleaners in Sacramento, won't even consider wet-cleaning.

"If you take a beautiful wool suit, and throw it in the dry-cleaning machine with ... even a little bit of water ... you can throw it away," he said.

Dry-cleaning removes dirt and stains from clothes with solvents instead of water. Perc is especially good at removing oil and grease from fabrics.

But Daniel can use his two perc dryers for only four more years. After more than 40 years in the business, he said he considers perc the best cleaning solvent.

Sinsheimer's Pollution Prevention Center has converted some Bay Area cleaners to the greener process. He's now eyeing Sacramento, where - in partnership with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District - he hopes to offer three dry cleaners \$20,000 to convert to wet-cleaning.

Wet-cleaning, though, has competition in the region.

A silicone-based cleaning system with the brand name Green Earth has a head start in Sacramento.

Jim Douglas, owner of Prestige Cleaners and technical director of Green Earth, said his shop near McClellan Air Park was first in the nation to try the alternative.

The state's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment has yet to make public its findings on the safety of one of Green Earth's chemical components, which has been linked to tumors in rats. The Air Board will decide, as early as Friday, if Green Earth qualifies under its incentive program.

The dispute over alternatives to perc illustrates the dilemma for dry cleaners: The choices are expensive or unknown, and they lack safety data on chemical alternatives.

Many, instead, may leave the business.

"I've had enough. It's too hard," Samantha Vanausdall said. She and her husband have already sold one shop in Natomas.

And for now, they plan to keep Elkhorn Cleaners running while they search for a buyer.

Another option: "Pack up and close the doors," Ryan Vanausdall said.

How to keep the fires burning

With new pollution rules in effect, high-tech alternatives and common-sense ways can save the air

By Alison Roberts - Associated Press
Sacramento Bee, Saturday, February 2, 2008

A blazing wood fire on the open hearth has finally met its match in the marketplace.

A growing array of efficient fireplace options means you can have your blaze in the living room and heat it, too, without so much as a whiff of environmental guilt.

Rising awareness of wood-smoke pollution, along with new burning restrictions, are fueling a lively market for conversions.

Traditional open-hearth fireplaces deliver much more style than heat, as most of the warmth flies up and out the chimney. Such fires also pump out particulate pollution, which has been linked to respiratory illnesses, including asthma and bronchitis, and even heart attacks.

And, wherever there's smoke, there are particulates.

"If you can smell it, it's polluting the room," says Ali Mohamad, an air quality engineer with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.

During winter, wood burning accounts for just about half - 49 percent - of particle pollution locally. It contributes to the air pollution that is blamed for an estimated 90 premature deaths in the Sacramento metropolitan area every year, according to the county air district.

Last fall, to reduce pollution in keeping with federal standards, the county air district adopted the Check Before You Burn program that prohibits wood burning when air quality falls to a certain pollution level. That program is in effect now, and will be each year from Nov. 1 to Feb. 28.

But the air district insists it isn't trying to extinguish evenings around the hearth.

"Some callers think that there's a total ban on fireplaces," says Lori Kobza, a spokeswoman for the air district. The district is focused on making fires that burn more cleanly. It is distributing vouchers worth \$75 to \$500 to residents to update the estimated 320,000 fireplaces and wood stoves in Sacramento County homes. The current voucher program is to run through March 31. Many retailers and manufacturers throw in additional discounts. (For information on vouchers, contact the Sacramento air district at 800-880-9025 or www.airquality.org. If you live outside Sacramento County, check with your local air district to see if incentive programs are available.)

People seem to be getting the message. Since the voucher program started in summer 2006, the district has issued 1,660 vouchers.

The Custom Fireside booth at last weekend's home and garden show at Cal Expo was one of the busiest, with a steady stream of people browsing, asking detailed questions, and leaving with paperwork.

If you're ready to warm up to converting your hearth, be prepared for option overload.

"It's not unusual for people to come in four or five times," before settling on a purchase, says Mitch Heller, one of the owners of Custom Fireside on Auburn Boulevard. The efficiency of these devices is made dramatically clear as the store heats up like an oven.

Which brings up one final piece of advice: Dress in layers if you're shopping to update your fireplace. That way, you can keep your cool while you stoke your imagination.

Philippines to ban incandescent bulbs

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, February 5, 2008

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines will phase out incandescent bulbs by 2010 in favor of more energy-efficient fluorescent globes to help cut greenhouse gas emissions and household costs, the president said Tuesday.

Acknowledging similar moves in Canada and Australia, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo called for a ban on incandescent bulbs.

"Like Australia, we should phase out incandescent lights by 2010," Arroyo said in her closing remarks at the Philippine Energy Summit.

The Asian Development Bank, a technical adviser at the summit, lauded the Philippine plan as a first in Asia. It said the most effective way to reduce the demand for electricity and greenhouse gases was to use energy more efficiently.

The bank "will support and encourage other developing countries to follow the Government of Philippines' lead and make the switch to more energy-efficient products like compact fluorescent lamps," Thomas Crouch, deputy director general of ADB's Southeast Asia Department said in a statement.

The Manila-based development bank said it was considering extending a \$30 million loan to the Philippines to help fund energy-efficiency programs, including projects for low-income families to mitigate the financial impact of changing from incandescent globes to the more expensive fluorescent alternative.

Fluorescent bulbs need just 20 percent of the electricity that incandescent bulbs use to produce the same amount of light. They also last six to ten times longer than the average incandescent bulb.

The Asian Development Bank said the switch would cut household lighting costs by as much as 80 percent and - because the amount of electricity used would be drastically lower - reduce the Philippines' annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2.2 million tons starting in 2010.

Three years ago, Cuban government workers went door to door in many neighborhoods replacing incandescent light bulbs with more-efficient alternatives to counter crippling energy blackouts across the island. The scheme inspired Venezuela to give away energy-saving fluorescent light bulbs.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Friday, Feb. 1, 2008:](#)

EPA foot-dragging targeted

From a healthy-lungs perspective, this administration can't clear out soon enough.

Conservation groups are correct to hold the Environmental Protection Agency's feet to the fire for the agency's failure to meet deadlines intended to clean the air in the San Joaquin Valley and the Los Angeles Basin.

The EPA is almost three years overdue in taking action to address the state's most polluted air.

The lawsuit, filed by the Association of Irrigated Residents and the Natural Resources Defense Council, accuses the EPA of violating federal laws that required action no later than February 2005 on a state-approved plan for the South Coast Air Quality Management District and by May 2006 for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Those plans address pollution from farms, factories and other industries.

The suit notes that the EPA also missed a July 2005 deadline for action on a statewide proposal to institute limits on emissions from diesel trucks.

The EPA's failure to act has forced state and regional agencies to implement the plans on their own. Those plans include commitments to meet federal standards for ozone and other pollutants -- but lacking EPA approval, they cannot be enforced in court by either the federal agency or private individuals, the plaintiffs argue.

As a result, the South Coast Air District is working under a federally approved plan that dates to 1999. It's even more absurd for the San Joaquin Valley Air District, which is working under the terms of a plan that dates to 1994.

Federal foot-dragging like this, taken alongside other EPA actions (and inactions), only serves to cement the notion that this is an administration with utter disregard, even contempt, for clean air and the health it would help afford all Americans.

From a healthy-lungs perspective, this administration can't clear out soon enough.

[Hanford Sentinel, Commentary, Monday, Feb. 4, 2008:](#)

Another View: Myths about Earth-friendly energy

By Lisa Margonelli

Special to The Washington Post

Last year, Americans spent more greenbacks on oil than any other nation -- about \$517 billion, according to the Energy Information Administration. But we've failed to lead in developing green energy, and that's going to cost us even more.

Historically, we've treated renewable energy and energy efficiency as virtuous, feel-good projects rather than shrewd investments in the industries of the future. It shows: We now trail China and Germany in renewable-power production and lag behind Japan and most of Europe in energy productivity. Worse, we may be missing out on the green gold rush of the century: The market for green energy is set to quadruple in the next eight years, according to the research firm Clean Edge.

Of course, the United States can catch up (and reduce smog, carbon dioxide emissions and geopolitical hassles while we're at it), but we'll need to start treating green energy as a source of jobs, cash and national influence. That means supporting it like a real energy industry -- with a vigorous mix of diplomacy, laws and incentives -- and dispelling some key myths.

1. "Green energy" is better at sponging up subsidies than creating jobs.

Not so, though Washington certainly now views environmentally responsible energy production as yet another way to pump subsidies to constituencies as diverse as corn farmers and Prius owners. That cavalier attitude is costing us a shot at future markets, which may mean the next generation of U.S. jobs.

Take concentrated solar energy -- which uses massive lenses and mirrors to "concentrate" the sun's rays to quickly produce cheap electricity. It has the potential to become a \$20 billion industry over the next five years, but the United States is in danger of losing its lead here to Spain, which has established 25-year production incentives designed to spur a competitive industry. Germany, using similar incentives, has already created 35,000 to 40,000 jobs in solar power, according to Emerging Energy Research. But in the United States, a fairly miserly tax credit expires this year, and risk-averse investors are holding back from building new plants.

2. There are no gushers left in the United States, so we have to look overseas for energy.

Not so. Even though the United States famously has only 3 percent of the world's crude oil reserves, we still have access to gushers of fuel savings. But U.S. energy policies -- such as the recent law begging automakers to reach a 35 miles-per-gallon standard by 2020 -- remain too timid to make the United States a world leader. (China has already mandated 36 mpg standards by this year.)

The U.S. military has been far smarter on this score. It's already started a greenish gold rush simply by announcing its intention to replace half the jet fuel it uses with non-petroleum fuels by 2016. By requesting competitive bids for small quantities of alternative fuels now, the Defense Energy Support Center, the Pentagon's energy-procurement agent, has indirectly rallied investors to supply coal-derived synthetic fuels -- and, eventually, more climate-friendly biofuels.

Other potential gushers lurk in unexpected places. Cambridge, Mass., has a five-year plan to reduce power consumption by 15 percent, according to the Kendall Foundation, an environmental grantmaker. Skip Laitner, an economist at the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, notes that paying bills online saves more than just stamps; if everyone did it, we'd save enough energy to power 150,000 homes. In 1879, Congress created the U.S. Geological Survey to map the country's resources; today, we should ask the National Academy of Sciences to map new sources of energy.

3. "Green power" can't deliver the volume of energy we need.

U.S. electrical generators lose more heat energy than Japan uses to run its entire economy, which raises the question of whether we need as much energy as we think we do. Anyway, simply recycling waste energy from industry and farming could supply nearly 20 percent of U.S. electrical needs, according to a 2005 study by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

Landmark legislation in the past, such as the 1862 Homestead Act and the 1933 act that created the Tennessee Valley Authority, has used federal resources to spur development. A similar plan for wind, solar and geothermal power on public lands in the Southwest could produce as much electricity as 75 to 100 coal plants, says Bob Epstein, a co-founder of Environmental Entrepreneurs. And each green gigawatt brings along other bonuses, in the form of tech innovation and rural jobs.

4. Americans are comfortable paying more than \$3 for gas. (Otherwise, we'd leave that SUV in the garage.)

Actually, we don't understand gas's hidden costs. Studies have shown that a few Americans know how much they spend each month on gas at the pump, but no one has any idea how much we pay for the stuff each April 15. Milton R. Copulos of the National Defense Council Foundation figures that we fork over a stunning \$10.07 per gallon in extra costs, including 51 cents for asthma treatment, \$1.21 for pollution abatement, \$1.39 for defense expenditures and \$5.19 for economic costs -- and that doesn't include the long-haul costs of dealing with greenhouse gases.

The true costs could be far lower, but surely it's time to get some good estimates and print them on gas pumps, receipts and billboards. If this sounds a lot like the surgeon general's warning on cigarettes, it is. We use gas with the same unconscious abandon that 1960s smokers used cigarettes as diet aids. Acknowledging the consequences won't change our habits overnight, but it will change our values over time. (Just ask the tobacco companies.)

Lisa Margonelli, a fellow at the New America Foundation, is the author of "Oil on the Brain: Petroleum's Long, Strange Trip to Your Tank."

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Presidential Candidates support California's waiver of controlling automotive emissions that was turned down by Bush's Administration. For more information on this clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Precandidatos apoyan ley de California contra contaminación vehicular

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, February 5,

Todos los pre-aspirante presidenciales en el 'super martes' apoyan una ley de California para controlar la contaminación vehicular que rechaza la administración del presidente George Bush.

La senadora demócrata, Hillary Clinton piensa que la industria petrolera debiera financiar esa ley y otra nacional, con impuestos.

El senador por Illinois, Barack Obama apoya la ley de California, y dijo que de ser electo invertirá 150 mil millones en un proyecto ambiental de energía.

John McCain respalda al gobernador Arnold Schwarzenegger y desea reducir la dependencia petrolera.

Mitt Romney dijo que California tiene derecho a tomar sus propias decisiones ambientales.