

## **Hundreds to participate in 'healthy air' week, vie for hybrid**

BY JOE BOESEN, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

Want to know what you can do to improve our often yucky air quality?

Coming up is a whole week of activities to teach you just that.

Next week is Healthy Air Living Week, devised by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to motivate individuals and businesses to investigate ways to pick away at their daily air pollution production.

People are urged to examine their habits and consider changing some, like biking or car pooling instead of driving.

"We are pushing residents to try new things outside their comfort zone," said district spokesperson Jaime Holt.

The effort replaces the Spare the Air program. Spare the Air days were called when air quality was expected to be unhealthy and residents were asked to reduce the amount of harmful emissions they created.

Holt said the program was ineffective because people had a limited amount of time to make decisions to reduce their emissions.

About 450 individuals, 50 businesses and 10 faith-based organizations in the San Joaquin Valley have signed up to participate in Healthy Air Living Week.

Employees of companies taking part can fill out cards pledging to do things like avoiding using a charcoal grill, having a utility company perform a home energy audit, biking or walking to work and not going through drive-thrus. People filling out the pledges are entered into a drawing to win a Toyota hybrid.

The cards can be downloaded at [healthyairliving.com](http://healthyairliving.com).

### **HEALTHY AIR ACTIVITIES**

For Bike to Work Day, July 11, the air district and Snider's Cyclery will set up three commuter stations in Bakersfield to supply riders with snacks and raffle off two commuter-friendly, comfortable bikes, said Tina Chapa, a manager at Snider's.

"Hopefully, we are getting people who are not bike savvy to start thinking about using bikes to get from point A to point B," Chapa said.

Also that day, there will be a "Healthy Air Living Night" 7:30 p.m. at Sam Lynn Ballpark as the Bakersfield Blaze take on the Stockton Ports. People could win a Healthy Air Living T-shirt and be entered to win a Toyota Prius.

For more information about Healthy Air Living Week, go to [healthyairliving.com](http://healthyairliving.com).

## **National Guard troops set to relieve fire crews**

By GARANCE BURKE, Associated Press Writer  
Modesto Bee and USA Today, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

FRESNO, Calif. — Weary crews battling blazes across northern and central California soon will get some help from the National Guard, the first time the troops have been called to ground-based firefighting duty since 1977.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Tuesday ordered 200 guardsmen to report for fire training to begin assisting on the fire lines early next week. The extra hands are expected to boost the nearly 19,000 personnel currently fighting the fires.

"I think that they all are doing a great job, but the danger is that our firefighters get stretched thin," the governor said. "A lot of them are working overtime, and they are staying up there for more

than 12 hours, sometimes 24 hours, 36 hours. So we have to be very careful that they get enough sleep and they get enough rest."

Schwarzenegger and the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, David Paulison, planned to visit Big Sur on Wednesday for a briefing on firefighting efforts in that hard-hit tourist region.

Already this year, drought conditions, high temperatures and a series of lightning storms have contributed to more than 680 square miles being scorched statewide.

Raging wildfires, from the western edge of the Sierra Nevada to coastal mountains near Big Sur, have created a smoky haze so stifling that some doctors in the San Joaquin Valley say their waiting rooms have been crowding with patients struggling to breathe.

Even without the blazes, the farming towns and subdivisions dotting the valley are typically shrouded in a layer of smog during the summer. But airborne ash from the blazes caused such a spike in air pollution over the weekend that meteorologist Shawn Ferreria said it took his breath away.

"I went and bought a mask because my lungs were not happy with me," said Ferreria, a senior air quality specialist for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "What we are experiencing is out of historical norms. I thought if I'm going to continue riding my bike to work, I better take an extra measure."

Officials had hoped a fog bank along the Northern California coast would help with fire suppression, but the moisture did not extend inland, said Brian Tentinger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Monterey.

Air district officials grew concerned that wind patterns could send more smoke billowing into the valley, which is bordered on three sides by mountains. Once the tiny particles of soot - which are blamed for triggering asthma and other respiratory problems - are carried inland, they're sealed in under a layer of warm air created by hot summer temperatures.

"Our waiting rooms are full of people with sore throats, itchy eyes and sniffles," said Kevin Hamilton, a respiratory therapist with Sequoia Community Health Center in Fresno. "It's certainly driving the clinic's appointments up."

Schools canceled outdoor activities and residents were warned to stay inside with the air conditioner running. For households lacking air conditioners, the district recommended families hole up in local malls.

Officials in the San Francisco Bay area said pollution levels had finally returned to healthy levels Tuesday, after several days of health warnings.

In the Big Sur region of the Los Padres National Forest, about 200 people along a roughly 15-mile stretch of Highway 1 were ordered to leave their homes and businesses. Evacuation orders also remained in place for occupants of at least 75 homes who were forced to leave the region last week, as a 47,000-acre blaze burning through uninhabited forest land moved closer.

In Southern California, a fire in the southern extension of the Los Padres forest north of Santa Barbara also prompted mandatory evacuations as wind up to 35 mph pushed flames toward homes in the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Officials said the fire had burned nearly 100 acres of heavy brush by Wednesday morning.

Santa Barbara County Fire Capt. Eli Iskow said about 40 homes were evacuated. County spokesman William Boyer said he didn't know how close flames had gotten to homes.

In the Sequoia National Forest east of Bakersfield, crews struggled to contain a 8,200-acre blaze there. Powerful gusts and choking smoke traveling up the steep canyons hampered their progress, and residents of neighboring towns were ordered to evacuate.

The Kiwanis Club of Mariposa, about 70 miles northwest of Fresno, canceled the town's annual fireworks show at the county fairgrounds because firefighters were using it as a staging area to contain a blaze that has burned through more than 2,700 acres.

If conditions worsen, air managers say they may recommend that other cities cancel their fireworks displays as well.

"Since there's fires to the north, west and east of us we're kind of surrounded," said Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist with the Fresno-based air district. "Depending on what happens with the intensity and the winds in the next few days, we could be breathing the smoke from any of them."

## **Will fireworks fizzle?**

**Some Valley vendors find sales are off to a slow start, but they are holding out hope that business will pick up closer to July 4.**

**By Doug Hoagland and Hannah Franklin / The Fresno Bee**

Wed., July 2, 2008

High gas prices, environmental concerns and wildfire worries are putting a damper on fireworks sales in some parts of the Valley this year.

Nonprofit groups that sell fireworks during the week leading up to Independence Day every year say sales are generally steady in more affluent neighborhoods.

And many say it's too early to tell whether this will be a bad year, noting that July 3 is traditionally a key day for sales.

"People embrace the Fourth of July with fireworks, and they just come out and buy," said Jaime Ramirez, 51, a seller at Butler and Cedar avenues in southeast Fresno.

Sales, however, are down at Ramirez's booth, where profits benefit the soccer teams at Fresno Pacific University. Last year, a booth at the same location cleared about \$8,000, said Ramirez, who is the men's soccer coach at the university. Sales so far this year are down \$300 to \$400 a day.

It's no reason to panic, Ramirez said, because money from fireworks sales don't make or break the soccer programs.

Sellers understand that people might be choosing to fill their tanks with gas rather than buy fireworks.

"If I put my shoes in their shoes, I would feel the same way," said John Thao, 38, manning a booth at Winery Avenue and Kings Canyon Road in southeast Fresno that benefits Lao Veterans of America Inc. Thao -- like other sellers -- said that last-minute shoppers still could make the holiday profitable for the nonprofit organizations selling fireworks.

"A lot of customers say we're only buying a little now and we'll wait until the Fourth to buy a lot," he said.

An industry official said he doesn't expect the sputtering economy to dampen sales significantly.

"Fireworks have generally proven to be recession-proof to a certain degree," said Dennis Revell, a spokesman for TNT Fireworks in the Sacramento area. "Much like Christmas time in a recessionary cycle, people may cut back on the number and cost of presents that they give, but they don't stop buying Christmas trees."

The consumer spirit had a Buchanan High sports boosters' booth near Shaw and Clovis avenues bustling on Tuesday. Fran Bishop, 45, said the Buchanan boosters presell orders for fireworks, which might help account for their steady business.

Across town at the Bullard High booth at Palm and Shaw avenues, Dan Jackson spent \$400 on fireworks -- more than he shelled out last year. Jackson, 63, said he and about 40 friends get together each Fourth of July, and he brings the fireworks.

Meanwhile, in the South Valley, Tuesday was the first day for booths to sell fireworks, and sales were slow, vendors said. But the churches, service clubs and charities that operate the booths said the first day is typically slow each year.

Some vendors in the South Valley and in Fresno were miffed that Gov. Schwarzenegger called last week for people not to buy fireworks that could ignite more fires in bone-dry California.

"It makes us like the bad guys," said Kathie Howard, 54, selling fireworks at Cedar and Shields avenues in central Fresno for Community Brethren Church. "If he wanted to stop sales, he should have said something earlier."

However, some mothers have said they agree with the governor, because they're concerned that fireworks will increase air pollution and endanger their children, said 24-year-old Curtis Scott, another vendor at the church booth.

Sales have been slow at the church's booth, but that's normal until July 3 and July 4, Howard and Scott said. Last year, they sold \$8,000 to \$10,000 on July 3 and July 4 combined.

But last year was unusual, they said. Thieves stole a truck loaded with fireworks from their pastor's house. The story made the news, and a sympathetic public flocked to their restocked booth.

"We were very blessed to have the support of the community," Howard said. "We're hoping we don't need a robbery to get people to come out this year."

## **7 Valley counties found unhealthy**

**Neighborhoods have dirty air, limited access to playgrounds, report finds.**

**By Barbara Anderson / The Fresno Bee**

Wed., July 2, 2008

People in the San Joaquin Valley are more likely than others in the state to live in unhealthy neighborhoods, and the state needs to make those communities a health priority, according to a report released Tuesday.

Among the 10 counties with the dirtiest air and least access to grocery stores and safe playgrounds, seven are in the San Joaquin Valley, according to the report by the Having Our Say Coalition, a statewide group working for health-care reform.

They are Tulare, Kings, Merced, Fresno, San Joaquin, Madera and Kern counties.

Health is tied to where a person lives, said Martin Martinez, policy director for the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, a lead organization for the Having Our Say Coalition.

Neighborhoods with sidewalks help, he said, and so does living near a grocery store and a park. But for too many Valley residents, those things are lacking, he said.

The result: People in the Valley are becoming obese, Martinez said Tuesday during a news conference at the Metro Ministry office in Fresno's Tower District.

"We are on the verge of a massive diabetes and obesity epidemic in the Valley," he said.

Obesity leads to more chronic illnesses, including arthritis and digestive problems as well as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure, said Helen Jones, a Fresno doctor of internal medicine.

According to the 2005 California Health Interview Survey, 65% of Valley adults are overweight or obese.

Jones said she advises patients to exercise and eat healthful foods. But without sidewalks and accessible grocery stores, her patients' lifestyles remain the same.

"I'll do my part, but I need some help," she said.

The state should invest in communities that lack parks, playgrounds, sidewalks and grocery stores, Martinez said.

Public health officials also need to do their part by becoming involved in the design of communities that promote health by incorporating adequate open space and walk-friendly neighborhoods.

Two bills pending in the Legislature would provide resources to help communities improve their health status, he said.

Assembly Bill 211, introduced by Assembly Member Dave Jones, D-Sacramento, promotes the involvement of public-health officers in land-use decisions.

AB 1472, introduced by Assembly Member Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, would provide assistance to public-health agencies and community organizations to evaluate land-use planning decisions.

Martinez said the Having Our Say report -- "The Path to Healthy Communities: Mapping California's Priorities" -- shows that legislators should give priority to Valley cities.

"The state is dropping the ball for everybody, but the conditions are worse here," he said.

To rank the health status of communities, researchers looked at demographics -- race and ethnicity, country of origin and languages spoken.

They also compiled information on income, health conditions, weight, fitness levels, insurance status and open space in communities.

The highest scores were given to communities with high poverty, large minority populations, low access to health insurance, a high prevalence of diseases, low levels of fitness and a lack of green space.

Many of the communities scoring the highest were unincorporated areas, including three in the Valley -- Lamont in Kern County, Kennedy in San Joaquin County and Cutler in Tulare County. Los Angeles County had the most high-priority cities, with 141.

Ellen Wu, co-author of the report and executive director of the Pan-Ethnic network, said she recognizes the state is in a budget crisis, but she said that makes concentrating on the prevention of disease in communities with the greatest health needs all the more important.

## **Smoky air leaves Californians straining to breathe**

By Garance Burke, Associated Press Writer

In the S.F. Chronicle and Washington Post, Wed., July 2, 2008

Fresno, Calif. (AP) --California's raging wildfires have created a smoky haze so stifling that some doctors in the state's landlocked farm country say their waiting rooms have been crowding with patients struggling to breathe amid the soot-laden air.

Even without the blazes, which have scorched more than 660 square miles statewide, the farming towns and subdivisions dotting the long, flat San Joaquin Valley are typically shrouded in a layer of smog during the summer.

But airborne ash from the hundreds of lightning-sparked fires caused such a spike in air pollution over the weekend that meteorologist Shawn Ferreria said it took his breath away.

"I went and bought a mask because my lungs were not happy with me," said Ferreria, a senior air quality specialist for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "What we are experiencing is out of historical norms. I thought if I'm going to continue riding my bike to work, I better take an extra measure."

Hundreds of firefighters were working overtime Tuesday to beat back blazes burning from the western edge of the Sierra Nevada to coastal mountains near Big Sur, where authorities enforced new, mandatory evacuations along a roughly 15-mile stretch of Highway 1.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered 200 National Guard troops to report for fire training Tuesday to relieve weary crews early next week. That marks the first time the guard has been asked to send soldiers to join ground-based fire fights since 1977, a guard spokesman said.

Officials had hoped a fog bank along the Northern California coast would help with fire suppression, but the moisture did not extend inland, said Brian Tentinger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Monterey.

Even as crews made headway against some of the worst blazes, air district officials grew concerned that wind patterns would send more smoke billowing into the valley, which is bordered on three sides by mountains.

Once the tiny particles of soot — which are blamed for triggering asthma and other respiratory problems — are carried inland, they're sealed in under a layer of warm air created by hot summer temperatures.

"Our waiting rooms are full of people with sore throats, itchy eyes and sniffles," said Kevin Hamilton, a respiratory therapist with Sequoia Community Health Center in Fresno. "It's certainly driving the clinic's appointments up."

Community Regional Medical Center, the area's only trauma center, showed no increase in respiratory cases. Some health professionals suggested that could be because asthma patients stayed inside to avoid exposure.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, officials said air quality had finally returned to healthy levels after several days of health warnings.

In the Big Sur region of the Los Padres National Forest, about 200 people were ordered to evacuate Tuesday, and evacuation orders remained in place for occupants of at least 75 homes who were forced to leave the region last week.

Endangered condors also sought to avoid the thick smoke by hunkering in cliffs along the Pacific Ocean. A 2-month-old baby condor died when fire swept through the gorge where it was nesting in a 1,000-year-old redwood, scientists said.

At Tassajara Zen Mountain Training Center monastery in nearby Carmel Valley, students and volunteers stretched sprinklers atop buildings in case embers started falling.

"Air quality is the wrong word. There is no quality," said Chris Slymon, who monitors the monastery's closest phone from a crossroads at Jamesburg 10 miles away.

In the Sequoia National Forest east of Bakersfield, crews from as far away as Kansas struggled to contain the 8,200-acre Piute Fire. Powerful gusts and choking smoke traveling up the steep canyons hampered their progress, and residents of neighboring towns were ordered to evacuate.

The Kiwanis Club of Mariposa, about 70 miles northwest of Fresno, canceled the town's annual fireworks show at the county fairgrounds because firefighters were using it as a staging area to contain a blaze that has burned through more than 2,700 acres.

Elsewhere, a wildfire that forced the evacuation of some 120 residents in a northern Arizona community had charred about 7,300 acres — or more than 11 square miles — by Tuesday night. The fire that broke out late Saturday near the mountain community of Crown King was 5 percent contained Tuesday night, firefighters said.

Firefighters said the fire was 5 percent contained by Tuesday night

It appears five lost hikers were responsible for the fires — possibly signal or warming fires — but officials were not sure who started what, sheriff's spokesman Dwight D'Evelyn said.

*Associated Press writers Tracie Cone in Fresno, Calif., and Scott Lindlaw in San Francisco contributed to this report.*

## **Dry air flow easing area's smog for coming holiday**

By Ramona Frances

Madera Tribune Wed., July 02, 2008

Poor air quality caused by smoke from lightning fires in neighboring counties has eased in Madera County, meteorologist Steve Johnson said Tuesday.

On the radar, Johnson said, there is one fire just south of Lake Isabella and one east of Sacramento big enough to show up on the radar and created by the same lightning storm. But most of the nearby smoke plumes appear to have been doused.

"Air quality last week was some of worst I have ever seen, but the disturbance is long gone and now we have a dry southwest flow that is bringing in much drier air," he said.

The air may be dry, but shouldn't be sweltering. Johnson said he does not expect the thermometer to show excessive heat this week in Madera or Fresno. July 4 should be very pleasant on the valley floor, with an on-shore breeze pushing smoke into hills, he said.

"I don't see any excessive moisture ahead. It will be warm, maybe the low 100s but not 110, and there won't be much humidity. Humidity from the monsoon is way east of us," he said.

The official "rainfall year" ended Monday, which Johnson says is significant, especially considering how low the rainfall has been this rain cycle.

"At the end of the rainfall year, we start back at zero. "

Rainfall is below normal for the entire state of California. Johnson said this is Fresno's 53rd driest year since records began 129 years ago at 8.40 inches of rain. Bakersfield ranked the second driest year ever with 2.38 inches and 32 percent of normal.

"This follows last year and last year was awful - two dry years back to back. This is a critical time for our reservoirs to have water," he said.

## **Calif. Wildfire smoke causes spike in doctor visits**

From the Associated Press

USA TODAY, Wednesday, July 02, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California's raging wildfires have created a smoky haze so stifling that doctors in the state's landlocked farm country say their waiting rooms have been crowding with patients struggling to breathe amid the soot-laden air.

Even without the blazes, the farming towns and subdivisions dotting the long, flat San Joaquin Valley are typically shrouded in a layer of smog during the summer.

But airborne ash from the hundreds of lightning-sparked fires caused such a spike in air pollution over the weekend that meteorologist Shawn Ferreria said it took his breath away.

"I went and bought a mask because my lungs were not happy with me," said Ferreria, a senior air quality specialist for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "What we are experiencing is way out of historical norms. I thought if I'm going to continue riding my bike to work, I better take an extra measure."

Hundreds of firefighters were working overtime Tuesday to beat back blazes burning from the western edge of the Sierra Nevada to coastal mountains near Big Sur, where authorities enforced new, mandatory evacuations along a roughly 15-mile stretch of Highway 1.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger deployed 200 National Guard troops to fire lines Tuesday to relieve weary crews, U.S. Forest Service officials said.

Officials had hoped a fog bank along the Northern California coast would aid firefighting efforts, but the moisture did not extend inland, said Brian Tentinger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Monterey.

Even as crews made headway against some of the worst blazes, air district officials in the Central Valley grew concerned that wind patterns would send more smoke billowing into the valley, which is bordered on three sides by mountains.

Once the tiny particles of soot — which are blamed for causing asthma and other respiratory problems — reach the valley, they're sealed in under a layer of warm air created by hot summer temperatures.

"Our waiting rooms are full of people with sore throats, itchy eyes and sniffles," said Kevin Hamilton, a respiratory therapist with Sequoia Community Health Center in Fresno. "It's certainly driving the clinic's appointments up."

In the Bay Area, a thin haze blanketed skyscrapers in downtown San Francisco, but local officials said pollution levels had finally returned to normal levels.

In the Big Sur region of the Los Padres National Forest, about 200 people were ordered to evacuate Tuesday, and evacuation orders remained in place for occupants of at least 75 homes who were forced to leave the region last week.

Endangered condors also sought to avoid the thick smoke by hunkering in cliffs along the Pacific Ocean.

At Tassajara Zen Mountain Training Center monastery in nearby Carmel Valley, students and volunteers stretched sprinklers atop buildings in case embers started falling.

"Air quality is the wrong word. There is no quality," said Chris Slymon, who monitors the monastery's closest phone from a crossroads at Jamesburg 10 miles away.

In the Sequoia National Forest east of Bakersfield, crews from as far away as Kansas struggled to contain the 8,200-acre Piute Fire. Powerful gusts and choking smoke traveling up the steep canyons hampered their progress, and residents of neighboring towns were ordered to evacuate.

Officials in Mariposa, about 70 miles northwest of Fresno, canceled the town's annual fireworks show at the county fairgrounds because firefighters were using it as a staging area to contain a blaze that has burned through more than 2,700 acres, county officials said.

Elsewhere, a wildfire that forced the evacuation of dozens of residents in a northern Arizona community had charred about 5,300 acres — or more than 2 square miles — as of Tuesday morning. Prescott National Forest spokeswoman Debbie Maneely said crews had not been able to control any of the blaze since it broke out late Saturday near the mountain community of Crown King.

Three houses and four other buildings had been destroyed, Maneely said Monday.

## **CSUB the latest to go to four-day workweek**

BY JOE BOESEN, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

A commute from Tehachapi to Cal State Bakersfield could cost Melanie Butler a lot of time and money.

But things just became easier for the career services counselor as the university will operate under a four-day workweek July 7 to Aug. 29.

"I think it's going to be pretty cool," said Butler, who also car pools.

The university is joining businesses locally and nationwide in compressing its workweek to what's called a 4-10: four 10-hour days and three days off.

"That's going to make for a long day," Butler conceded. "If I get a antsy, I'll go over to the library and do a couple of flights of stairs."

The university expects to save about \$43,000 in operational costs at a time of state budget cuts, said spokeswoman Jaclyn Hernandez. Summer school courses will not be affected because classes aren't held on Fridays.

Employees will work from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. with an hour lunch break.

Increasing energy costs are forcing companies and even governments to consider the alternative workweek. Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman recently made the state the first to institute a mandatory four-day workweek for most state employees, to save energy and employees money.

Although the option has been available locally for employees, a Friday off is transforming from a perk to a money saver.

The option to work an alternative work week has been available to some Kern County employees for at least seven years, said Susan Wells of the county administrative office.

The opportunity "depends on how it affects the department," she said. She did not have figures on how many employees work an alternative schedule.

Taft College has had a four-day workweek during the summer for at least 20 years, said Superintendent/President William Duncan. As a result, he said the college saves about \$22,000 in electrical costs.

It began as a way to save operational costs but now also saves employees money as they commute, Duncan said.

Employees do not seem to mind the longer days.

"We all love the four-day work week," said Barbara Wingler, a union representative of Taft College employees.

Debbie Moreno of the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce said her group supports more flexible workweeks. During the summer, chamber employees work what is called a 9-80 schedule: employees work nine hours Monday through Thursday then have every other Friday off. The other Friday, employees work eight hours.

"We started doing it before the cost of energy was an issue," Moreno said. "It was a perk for employees."

Aera Energy has allowed employees to work under a 9-80 program for more than 10 years, according to spokeswoman Susan Hershberger. She said "a vast majority" of workers take advantage.

"Employees like it and it has worked well in the business," she said.

There are stringent regulations limiting how far companies can go in compressing a workweek. Under California's Labor Code 511, employees can decide to work a week of four 10-hour days if two-thirds vote for it via secret ballot.

Several local companies have shown an interest in moving to a four-day workweek, said Julie LaBauve, human resources specialist at PAS Associates, a Bakersfield human resources consulting firm.

They've asked her company how to make the switch.

"As long as they follow the guidelines, implement it correctly and the employees want it, they should be able to do it," she said.

## **EPA set to approve smog reduction plan**

The Associated Press

Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

DALLAS—The Environmental Protection Agency is ready to sign off on a clean air plan for the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The proposal would reduce ozone-forming pollutants by 88 tons per day. The amount is more than double what the earlier plan proposed.

The EPA will take comments on the plan before making its final decision.

The proposed approval has some conditions. The EPA said the state has to finalize regulations that would reduce the amount of discrete emission credits available in the nine-county non-attainment area covered by the plan.

Environmental groups such as the Dallas Chapter of the Sierra Club said the plan is woefully short of where it needs to be.

"There has been talk of further action regarding this air plan as far as legal action. There has been talk from the environmental community of requesting that the state agency's air authority be pulled," said Rita Beving, conservation spokeswoman for the Dallas club, referring to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

She said as far as whether a lawsuit will be filed, "we would be looking at something within 60 to 90 days."

Beving said her organization and other environmental groups had met with the EPA behind closed doors to ask the EPA to pressure the state environmental agency to do more or partially disapprove the plan.

"We were totally surprised by this announcement. We're very disappointed that we tried to work with a federal agency to get a better plan," Beving said.

She said the Dallas-Fort Worth area has already faced what she called "two failed air plans and we feel this plan will be a third."

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Wednesday, July 2, 2008:](#)

### **Embrace clean air**

**Valley ozone fighters have launched a new offensive against bad air, and the struggle could be coming to your doorstep.**

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which launched its new Healthy Air Living campaign a few months ago, begins pitching the program in earnest this summer.

"Spare the Air" alerts are over. Every day is a spare-the-air day in this sense: The effort to reduce ozone levels in the valley is now about permanent lifestyle choices that involve both individuals and their employers.

Things like working from home, at least on occasion. Lunch deliveries, so employees don't have to drive their cars during the noon hour. No-charge bus rides. Preference for green-minded companies in local government contracting. After-dark lawn maintenance, because ozone forms only in daylight.

Air district officials plan to meet with city councils and business leaders across the valley, including the Kern County Board of Supervisors on July 8. The message: Change the way you think about work schedules, transportation -- everything in your world.

That sort of large-scale, long-range thinking is essential if the valley is to meet a 2024 federal cleanup deadline. The Spare the Air program, which officials say has run its course, was fine for what it was: an alert system on murky days. It's time to think big.

This is just the perfect opportunity, with valley temperatures on the rise and ozone levels peaking in this 300 mile-long soup-bowl of trapped air.

The air district doesn't have the authority to mandate four-day work weeks or after-hours lawn care, but it can push the valley's 58 cities and eight counties to consider such steps. The campaign hits its stride the week of July 7-13, typically one of the most polluted weeks of the year in the San Joaquin Valley. We'd be wise to listen.

[Fresno Bee editorial, Wed., July 2, 2008:](#)

### **Cost of home fireworks too high**

**Money for non-profits outweighed by injury, loss and degradation of the air.**

We need to rethink our love affair with fireworks, at least the ones we ignite ourselves. In a season of unusual dryness, already marked by more than 1,000 fires statewide, and with the attendant risk of injury and property damage, the joy of those "safe-and-sane" personal displays is one we can ill afford.

Suggesting that people forgo the use of fireworks at their homes on July 4th is just a step short of sacrilege. The nation's independence has been celebrated with pyrotechnics since it began. For centuries, we have gleefully heeded the words of John Adams, a Founding Father and second president of the United States, who wrote that independence "ought to be celebrated by pomp

and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has urged Californians to boycott fireworks this year. Such a voluntary appeal may have little impact. And realistically, it's too late to do anything else this year.

But we ought to be thinking hard about whether we want to continue this hallowed tradition.

There is a powerful lobby for fireworks sales, fronted by the many nonprofit organizations that depend on such sales for much of their revenue. And there's no doubt that it would be a hardship for those local groups to lose the money they raise each year selling fireworks.

A typical charity can net \$12,000 to \$15,000 from a fireworks booth. But that revenue comes at a cost to the community.

There is the danger of fires, even when the so-called safe-and-sane fireworks are handled properly. Several thousand people are treated each year nationwide for burns caused by fireworks.

And fireworks aren't cheap, as anyone who's been to one of the booths that have sprouted around the region can attest.

In the Valley, there is an additional concern for the pollutants that fireworks add to the air. Last year, Valley air officials estimated that up to 10 times the normal particulate pollution was generated by July 4th fireworks.

Firefighters and police make efforts each year to quell the use of illegal fireworks, with some small success. But legal fireworks complicate that task. Many people use the legal fireworks to disguise their use of illegal materials, a process called "masking."

If all fireworks were banned, it would make the enforcement task much easier.

California needs to find a safe-and-sane alternative to fireworks to fund our charities. Some suggest that nonprofits be weaned from their addiction to fireworks sales gradually, phasing in a ban over several years.

At the individual level, families and friends could simply write a check to the affected nonprofits. Then gather everyone, fill up an ice chest, roll up some blankets and head for one of the big public displays planned around the Valley on Friday. You'll see a bigger and better show, and for a lot less money and risk.

[Bakersfield Californian, Commentary, Wednesday, July 3, 2008:](#)

### **Refinery should have laid out all options for expansion**

BY LOIS HENRY, Californian staff writer

Well, well, well.

Turns out all the hand-wringing and gnashing of teeth over whether it would be worse to choke on a cloud of modified hydrofluoric acid or a cloud of sulfuric acid may have been all for naught.

According to the latest environmental document on the proposed expansion of the Big West of California refinery on Rosedale Highway, there's another refining option that uses no acid.

Huh. Isn't that interesting?

I wondered why that option, being called Alternative D, hadn't been put on the table in the first place.

I asked Gene Cotten, the vice president of refining at Big West.

He told me Big West still believes modified hydrofluoric acid (HF) is the best alternative for their project, but they wanted to give the Kern County Board of Supervisors a look at all the options out there.

OK, then why wasn't Alternative D in the first EIR?

Pause.

"I guess we were a little ... caught unaware on the uproar that would be generated," he said.

An understatement if ever I heard one.

The only downside to Alternative D, from the refinery's perspective, is that it's more expensive than modified HF and doesn't produce as valuable a product. Alternative D will produce gasoline and diesel but not alkylate, a blending component for cleaner burning fuels.

Will it still do the job? I asked.

"It provides an alternative avenue," Cotten said.

Translation: Yes.

I've said before that I favor the Big West expansion. I still do.

But these little "informational lapses" can't continue if refinery officials want to gain the public's trust and approval of their project.

Though Cotten told me Big West presented Alternative D to the county, it was only after the county Planning Department pushed them relentlessly to find more options than the two nasty acids we've been arguing over for months.

County planners gave Big West credit for coming up with Alternative D.

But why did it take more than a year and a whole lot of community strife before Alternative D surfaced?

Here's why. Big West is in business to make money. OK, nothing illegal about that. But they were apparently so attached to the cheaper HF or modified HF options that they dragged the process out, eroding the public's trust and threatening their own deadlines for taking advantage of EPA air credits.

Despite the turmoil, I do think this was ultimately a healthy process.

For example, one of the best ideas in the EIR includes a zone change proposed by the Planning Department that will force Big West to come to the Board of Supervisors for any substantive future changes to the refinery. That means increased public scrutiny.

Another is a requirement that Big West install real-time video cameras that will feed to a public Web site, increase notification to local agencies if there's a spill or leak of any kind and place sensors at nearby businesses to detect any gases being released.

That will make refinery operations more open to the public and the public will be more aware of what's cooking over there.

Since the 1930s, the refinery has been a fixture in this community.

It needs to be a member of the community as well.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Wednesday, July 2, 2008](#)

**Inconsistent approach by air quality district**

It continues to amaze me the hypocrisy of the air quality control district in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. Why? Because of the fireworks that are allowed in our counties.

They are so worried about our fireplace burn days, but not the smoke that fireworks leave behind. Fireworks should be banned in our county for this reason.

STEVE BOSMA, Modesto

*Editor's note: The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is discouraging the use of home fireworks. Cities and counties decide whether to allow them.*

[Hanford Sentinel, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, July 1, 2008:](#)

### **Who's at fault for bad air?**

Editor: I have to take a moment to acknowledge the damage that local farmers and dairy farmers cause to the air in our Valley. I was thinking about all the methane gas released by the cows waste as I was sitting in traffic today.

As I tried to peer across the street to watch a farmer plowing his field, my view of the deadly cloud of dust he was throwing into the air was obstructed by the thick blanket of smoke I was trying to look through. I thought, "How awful that these cows and farmers are creating this horrible blanket of smoke in our Valley!"

I did hear something about some fires burning in other parts of the state, but that smoke couldn't possibly settle in our valley, could it? I mean, if it did, then all the smog and pollution from those valleys could settle here just as easily, couldn't it?

That's just craziness! The farmers growing our food and the dairy farmers producing our milk must really be the culprits. Maybe the farmers started the fires? Perhaps the flames have been fueled by the methane gas put out by the cows waste?

I'll test the theory tonight. I'll spend the night in my garage with a cow eating, pooping, and, dare I say it, even passing gas, and someone else can stay in their garage tonight with their car running. I wonder who will come out in the morning? Any volunteers?

Ondria Mello, Hanford

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses analysis report confirms that emissions from a cement manufacturing company near urban zones contain high levels of toxic particles. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **A audiencia regular, emisiones de fábricas de cemento**

Manuel Ocaño - Noticiero Latino,  
Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, July 2, 2008

Autoridades ambientales del sur de California discutirán hoy en audiencia en Riverside resultados de un análisis que confirmó que las emisiones de una fábrica de cemento cerca de zonas urbanas contienen altos niveles de químicos y partículas peligrosos para la salud.

La Oficina Distrital de Administración de la Calidad del Aire informó que en la audiencia analizará diversas propuestas, incluida una de exigir que todas las fábricas de cemento en California controlen al máximo sus recursos químicos y sus emisiones.

Una activista del Centro Comunitario para la Justicia y Acción Ambientales, Rachel López comentó que la audiencia permitirá que la comunidad se informe activamente y contribuya a soluciones creativas junto con las autoridades.