

Wood burning banned today across Bay Area

Christopher Heredia, staff writer
S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

MILLBRAE -- Indoor and outdoor wood burning is banned in the Bay Area through noon today because of a Spare the Air alert issued by local air quality officials.

With light winds trapping smoke near the ground, residents and businesses are barred from burning wood or manufactured fire logs in fireplaces, woodstoves or outdoor fire pits, under the advisory issued Monday by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Air quality is forecast to be moderate today, with pollution levels in the eastern Bay Area approaching levels considered unhealthy for people with asthma and other respiratory ailments. Wood smoke from fireplaces and woodstoves accounts for a third of particulate pollution in the Bay Area, air quality officials say.

Today's alert is the second of the winter season, which the air quality agency defines as running from Nov. 1 to Feb. 28. First-time offenders are issued warnings; repeat violators can be fined as much as \$2,000.

Inspectors with the air quality agency spot violators through public complaints and by making neighborhood rounds themselves. Inspectors received 50 complaints and issued six warnings during the first winter Spare the Air alert Wednesday, said Lisa Fasano, a spokeswoman for the agency.

No burn ban issued for Bay Area

By Denis Cuff
Contra Costa Times, Monday, Nov. 24, 2008

Wood fires in fireplaces, stoves and outdoor fire pits are banned until noon Tuesday in the nine Bay Area counties because of the second Spare the Air alert of the winter season.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District forecasts unhealthy air because of weather conditions that trap smoke near ground level. People with lung or heart ailments are especially vulnerable to health problems from the smoke.

The burning ban went into effect at noon today, and will last for 24 hours. Violators can get written warnings for a first offense, and fines of hundreds or thousands of dollars for repeat offenses.

For more information, visit www.sparetheair.org or call the air district at 1-877-4-NO-BURN.

Spare the Air alert issued for today, making burning wood illegal

By the Mercury News
In the Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Monday, Nov. 24, 2008

Today has been declared a Spare the Air Day by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, meaning it is illegal to burn wood or fire logs in fireplaces, wood stoves or other wood-burning devices.

A new wood-burning regulation passed by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District in July restricts lighting wood on fire on Spare the Air Days from Nov. 1 to Feb. 28. People who burn wood as their sole source of heat are exempt from the regulation.

On average, air quality officials declare about 15 to 20 Spare the Air alerts during the winter.

Anyone caught using wood-burning devices, such as fireplaces, wood stoves or fire pits will first get a warning, but a second infraction could lead to a fine from hundreds to thousands of dollars, depending on the violation.

Californian exclusive: Florez named Senate majority leader

By Christine Bedell, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Sunday, Nov. 23, 2008

Dean Florez has been tapped the next state Senate majority leader, overseeing policy and procedure in California's top house, keeping swing districts in Democratic hands and serving as an ambassador to the Assembly.

It's a plum post for the politically ambitious Florez, D-Shafter, and bodes well for his district as legislative leaders stand a better chance of getting bills approved and calling attention to their constituents' plights.

A formal announcement by the incoming Senate leader, President Pro Tempore-elect Darrell Steinberg of Sacramento, is scheduled for Monday. Steinberg selected Florez; the two are longtime friends and colleagues.

"He's an outstanding leader," Steinberg said in an exclusive interview. "He understands the intricacies of solving different problems and making deals happen on the legislative floor. He is smart and I really look forward to working with him."

Florez said it's a chance to close out his Senate career with some big accomplishments, boost his 2010 bid for lieutenant governor and prove he's a team player.

"To end as majority leader is a nice way to leave the institution," said Florez, who joined the Senate as a fellow in 1987 and is termed out in two years.

He'll replace state Sen. Gloria Romero, D-East Los Angeles. Steinberg did not reveal any of his other leadership picks; he denied rumors that he's already settled on a successor to Florez in 2010.

THE GIG

The majority leader has several key jobs, among them running the Senate logistically, ensuring his caucus is raising enough campaign cash and otherwise preparing for upcoming elections.

The main Senate election goal for 2010, Florez said, is electing Democrats to his 16th District seat and the San Diego area's 40th District post.

The majority leader also helps the pro tempore direct policy and negotiates with the state Assembly on legislative priorities. Florez represented the 30th Assembly District from 1998 to 2002, then was elected senator.

"It's the most coveted spot next to pro tem," Florez said of majority leader.

Florez said his top priority when he takes the reins Dec. 1 will be a state water bond that generates new water sources, gets past environmental concerns about building dams and funds "to the hilt" underground water storage in Kern County.

Florez supports a controversial peripheral canal that would route water south around the environmentally sensitive San Joaquin/Sacramento delta.

He hopes solving some valley water problems would also help him mend fences with local farmers not happy with him over such issues as his landmark legislation [imposing air-quality regulations](#) on agriculture.

The majority leader makes a lot of speeches around the state, Florez said, and he intends to make it known his district has some of the state's worst poverty, teen pregnancy and school dropout rates.

Florez's district includes the cities of Arvin, Delano, Shafter, Wasco and parts of Bakersfield plus pieces of Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties.

"Not all the poor people live in east L.A. or South Central. They live in Lamont, parts of east Bakersfield, McFarland," Florez said. "I need to educate my caucus on our needs."

One downside, he said, is he'll no longer be able to chair committees and therefore call hearings as he's done to shed light on a whole host of topics. Florez chairs governmental organization, overseeing horseracing, public gaming, the National Guard and liquor.

TEAM PLAYER?

Steinberg said he also picked Florez because he's a veteran legislator with a record of getting big things done and because the two men have a good relationship.

"We have very good chemistry," Steinberg said. "And I love his energy. He's indefatigable."

Florez has long been outspoken and taken other politicians to task, whether the Kern County Board of Supervisors, the First 5 Kern tobacco-tax spending agency or Assemblywoman Nicole Parra, D-Hanford. So some outside the Senate may wonder if he's the right man for the job, Florez acknowledged.

"The No. 1 question out there on me is 'Can Dean Florez be a team player, which is the essence of this job?'" he said.

But, Florez and Steinberg both said, Florez has great relationships within the Senate. Steinberg called him "the ultimate inside team player."

"When he understands what has to be done, he is unafraid to take the heat. And that is a very important quality in a leader," Steinberg said.

Florez likened Steinberg's temperament to that of President-elect Barack Obama and his own to Obama's reportedly combative pick for chief of staff, Rep. Raum Emanuel, D-Ill.

"Every Obama needs a Raum Emanuel around," Florez said.

WHAT SENATE MAJORITY LEADER DOES

- Speaks for his members' positions on issues and for the Senate as an institution.
- Spends much time on the Senate floor, opening the day's proceedings, keeping legislation moving, calling the order bills are debated.
- That "right of first recognition" on the floor enables the majority leader to offer amendments, substitutes and motions before other senators.
- Ensures the caucus is raising campaign money, doing the right things legislatively to win upcoming elections.
- Helps the Senate leader direct policy.
- Works with the state Assembly on bills.

Environmentalists draft bold roadmap for Obama

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press Writer
Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

WASHINGTON—A united and diverse coalition of environmental advocacy groups has sent President-elect Barack Obama its roadmap for change—and it represents a U-turn from the policies of President George W. Bush.

The 391-page report titled "Transition to Green" lays out what the incoming Obama administration can do in its first 100 days and beyond at more than a dozen different agencies to achieve the dual goals of cleaning up the environment and revitalizing the economy.

"It gives a whole vision on how to move forward to repower, rebuild, refuel America," said Jim Lyon, senior vice president for conservation for the National Wildlife Federation, one of 29 groups that signed onto the laundry list of policy recommendations.

Many of the suggestions in the report released Tuesday echo what Obama has said on the campaign trail and signaled during the transition: capping the gases blamed for global warming; basing environmental decisions on sound science; and taking a more cautious approach to energy production on federal lands.

Other recommendations appear to be more aggressive than Obama's stated policies. The groups call for cutting funding for nuclear energy, reinstating a moratorium on drilling off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and reconsidering recent oil and gas leases in some parts of Alaska.

The bold outline from groups working to protect oceans, increase park space and reduce pollution shows that the environmental community is going on the offensive, after eight years of playing defense. The Bush administration in the last eight years has eased some environmental protections, and in the next eight weeks it is set to relax regulations governing power plant emissions and protecting endangered species.

Environmentalists are hoping to capitalize on a new Democratic administration and a larger Democratic majority in Congress that have already signaled that energy and environmental policy are a priority.

"We know this administration is much more friendly to environmental protection than the one that is leaving town," said Rodger Schlickeisen, president of Defenders of Wildlife, which signed onto the report with the Natural Resources Defense Council, American Rivers, Greenpeace and the National Audubon Society.

"We all see this as an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past," Schlickeisen said.

But they admit there could be some stumbling blocks—namely, a nation in the throes of an economic crisis and larger caucus of moderate Democrats from manufacturing states.

"We need to be able to show that an aggressive response to reducing global warming emissions will not harm the economy, but in fact generate new jobs and marshal investment in clean technologies," said Kevin

[Sacramento Bee editorial, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008:](#)

Editorial: Californians will lead on warming

In responding to the threat of climate change, California has been far ahead of the federal government. It's an exciting and worrisome place to be.

Exciting, because California has rightly acknowledged the threat that global warming poses to its future and to that of all countries.

Worrisome, because if California were to go it alone in cutting greenhouse gases and transitioning to a cleaner economy, other states and nations might continue with business as usual, overwhelming any progress here.

Yet as the Nov. 4 election has demonstrated, California will not need to go it alone. In speaking by video to a conference in Los Angeles last week, President-elect Barack Obama repeated his vow to seek federal legislation that would cut greenhouse gas emissions nationwide to 1990 levels by 2020, with an additional 80 percent cut by 2050.

He also promised "a new era of global cooperation on climate change" – in other words, an international treaty that President George W. Bush has spurned.

It was revealing that Obama chose a bipartisan summit in Los Angeles, convened by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and four other governors, to make his second major policy address since the election. Clearly, the sun is rising over California's influence on climate policy.

One sign of California's clout is the ascension of U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman of Los Angeles to head the House Energy and Commerce Committee. On a 137-122 vote in his Democratic caucus last week, Waxman unseated John Dingell of Michigan to head this powerful panel, which has authority over major bills involving energy, health care and climate policy.

Unlike Dingell, who has long been aligned with the Detroit auto industry, Waxman supports stringent laws to cap greenhouse gases and improve the fuel efficiency of trucks and cars. Had Dingell retained his chairmanship, it would have complicated Obama's efforts to pass strong environmental legislation and retool the auto industry for the challenges ahead.

Waxman's new post means that he and California Sen. Barbara Boxer, who heads the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, will play pivotal roles on future climate legislation. And by the time Obama finishes making all his appointments, Waxman and Boxer could have several California connections within the new administration.

Last week, Obama's transition office announced its intent to name one of Waxman's aides, Philip Schiliro, as the White House director of congressional relations.

Mary Nichols, who heads the California Environmental Protection Agency and is charged with implementing the state's main climate law, Assembly Bill 32, has been mentioned as a possible candidate to serve as Obama's EPA secretary. Other Californians are being considered for posts at the energy and interior departments.

While some analysts continue to dismiss California's climate policies as acts of symbolism, the actions of the president-elect indicate otherwise. These policies are being closely studied by other states and countries, and they could well become a template for the new president and his environmental advisers.

At the very least, Obama and his transition team seem highly interested in California's efforts, and in the trailblazers who have put the state on the map.

[Modesto Bee editorial, Monday, Nov. 24, 2008:](#)

A good way to find sewer capacity, jobs

What would lure more industry and jobs to Modesto? A better educated work force? Improved roads? More amenities?

All would help, but the biggest factor in bringing a major employer to Modesto might be finding more sewer capacity. Not exactly exciting stuff. But properly disposing of waste water is one of

the most significant issues facing industry today. While no one likes to think about effluent, it is an unavoidable byproduct of food processing, one of the most likely industries to locate in this area.

If food processors can't dispose of waste water here, they can't do business here. Even with the new treatment plant being built at Modesto's Jennings Road facility, the city lacks capacity to attract a major new employer.

What to do? Turn the problem into the solution.

Forward-thinking business owners and city officials have devised an innovative solution that makes the scarcity of treatment capacity part of the solution -- with little or no cost to the city. It's a market-based solution, or a cap-and-trade plan.

City staff will present it to the council Finance Committee on Monday. If the full council gets behind it, as it should, the plan could be in place by next spring.

Twelve large companies create about a third of Modesto's entire waste-water flow. Each has a permit to use city treatment facilities. That permit sets out how much waste each company can put into the system.

Like every homeowner, the firms also pay a monthly sewer bill. Unlike a typical homeowner, those bills are enormous -- ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 a month. Even if the companies cut waste, they still must pay 80 percent of their monthly fees.

Reducing waste water for such operations is expensive, requiring installation of new processes and systems. Without a way to recoup those costs, there is little incentive for any of these major employers to install new systems.

The new plan would allow companies to trade or sell any excess waste capacity to another company -- new or existing. Or, the company could "donate" it to the city for a tax credit. The city could then provide it to a new company, reducing that company's start-up costs.

Similar cap-and-trade plans are in place in other areas and they work. It's also similar to the plan proposed by Gov. Schwarzenegger to help reduce the state's air pollution.

Such plans give waste reduction real and tangible value, creating a reason for companies to invest in reducing waste water. Several are planning such improvements.

This is important. At least two companies have lost interest in Modesto after being told they would have to wait for sewer capacity to be freed up. This plan should create enough waste-water capacity to allow new companies to get started or existing companies to expand.

"Some are already implementing programs," said Jan Ennenga, executive director of the Manufacturers Council of the Central Valley. "Others would like to expand ... they're busting at the seams."

Expansion creates jobs. Let's not waste this opportunity.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses air pollution causes more deaths than vehicular accidents. For more information on this and other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Provoca más muertes la contaminación que los accidentes vehiculares

Manuel Ocaño

Noticero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

Un estudio de la Universidad Estatal de Fullerton, California, aseguró que en el estado la contaminación del aire produce más muertes prematuras que todos los accidentes fatales de vehículos.

El análisis dice que si se pudiera reducir la contaminación en el sur de California y en el Valle de San Joaquín a niveles en que dejaran de causar muertes, se salvarían más vidas que si cesaran todos los accidentes.

La investigación universitaria indica que el deterioro del aire en esas dos regiones, las más contaminadas en el país, se traducen en unas tres mil 780 muertes prematuras anuales.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses over 33 pollutants in excess are registered this year in Ciudad Juarez.](#)

Registran 33 excesos de contaminantes este año

El Diario, Sunday, November 23, 2008

Hasta lo que va del año se han registrados 33 excedencias de contaminación en Ciudad Juárez, es decir, que en promedio al menos dos veces al mes la calidad del aire que respiran los fronterizos no ha sido satisfactoria, indican reportes de la Dirección de Normatividad Ambiental.

De acuerdo con las normas de Salud, el índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire (Imeca) no debe rebasar los 100 puntos.

Sin embargo, la polución por PM10 (Partículas Menores a 10 Micras), que es principalmente polvo, superó esa cantidad en 28 ocasiones, seguida por cuatro excedencias de ozono (O₃) y una de monóxido de carbono (CO).

De las 28 de PM10, 12 fueron consideradas naturales debido a que la velocidad del viento superó los 48 kilómetros por hora, que es el parámetro para establecer si fue normal.

Mientras, el monóxido de carbono (que se desarrolla durante la temporada de frío) rebasó los límites el 23 de enero, en pleno invierno, con 113 puntos.

Sin embargo el ozono (el principal contaminante durante el calor) tuvo su primera excedencia el 14 de julio con 129 puntos Imeca, le siguió otra el 11 de agosto con 115, para el 4 de septiembre se alcanzaron 122 y el 19 de ese mismo mes 105.

En este mes de noviembre, se han registrado cuatro excesos de PM10, los más recientes fueron el día 14 y 17.

De acuerdo con las autoridades, la contaminación de PM10, se debe principalmente al polvo que permanece en el ambiente a causa de las calles sin pavimentar, sobre todo en la zona poniente.

En tanto que la polución por ozono se genera por la presencia en el aire de compuestos químicos como los óxidos de nitrógeno e hidrocarburos, el clima caluroso, la fuerte insolación y la ausencia de vientos, y se concentra principalmente de mayo a octubre.

Ahora con la temporada de frío, el contaminante que comenzará a incrementarse será el monóxido de carbono, pero debido a las bajas temperaturas la ciudadanía sufre por las inversiones térmicas durante las mañanas, que llegan a prolongarse hasta las tardes.

Ante ello, las autoridades pidieron a la comunidad no ejercitarse a muy temprana hora, debido a que el smog puede estar a nivel de piso.

Explicaron que la inversión térmica se presenta principalmente durante la temporada de frío, y al estar expuestas las personas a la polución pueden presentar problemas en las vías respiratorias, principalmente los niños y adultos mayores.

El fenómeno sucede cuando una capa de aire caliente queda atrapada debajo de una capa de aire frío, lo cual impide la circulación del primer manto fuera del cielo urbano y así concentra los contaminantes.

Los contaminantes que se acumulan son una mezcla de partículas menores y gases de monóxido de carbono, que cuando se presenta a nivel del suelo se respiran más fácilmente, se dio a conocer.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Los Angeles develops a solar energy plan. The Sun would generate 10% of electricity.](#)

Los Ángeles develó plan de energía solar

El Sol generaría 10% de la electricidad

Univision, Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2008

LOS ÁNGELES, California – El Departamento de Agua y Energía Eléctrica podría cubrir 10 por ciento de las necesidades energéticas de la ciudad bajo un plan develado el lunes por el alcalde Antonio Villaraigosa.

Paneles solares en techos

"Nuestra iniciativa solar es la más grande de todas en cualquier parte del mundo. Cuando tome efecto, L.A. tendrá 1,280 megawatts adicionales de capacidad -más de la que existe hoy en todos los Estados Unidos", dijo Villaraigosa.

Se espera que 'Solar LA' le cueste a los angelinos \$2 dólares al mes extra una vez que la iniciativa esté completa, pero los detalles del plan, entre ellos el costo estimado preciso, serán divulgados en los próximos 90 días.

El esquema del plan apunta hacia la generación de 380 megawatts de energía a partir de paneles solares que serán instalados en los techos de residentes y a través del programa SunShares, que le permitirá a los clientes adquirir acciones de una planta solar del DWP a cambio de créditos en sus recibos de energía.

Otros 500 megawatts de energía vendrán de proyectos de energía solar que alimentarán a dos estaciones de transmisión del DWP.

La tercera parte del plan tratará de generar 400 megawatts de energía a partir de sistemas solares instalados en los techos de edificios propiedad de la ciudad. Ese proyecto, que será asignado por competencia en 2014, aparecerá en la boleta electoral de marzo.

El proyecto costaría entre \$1,500 y \$3 mil millones de dólares, y los fondos provendrían de bonos del tesoro, capital privado y fondos federales y estatales.

"El plan solar de L.A. representa la generación de energía renovable en Los Ángeles, por Los Ángeles y para Los Ángeles", dijo David Nahai, gerente general del DWP. "Le abre la puerta de L.A. a la industria solar como ningún otro mercado, y esperamos que la industria solar recíprocara en turno reduciendo sus precios sustancialmente".

Actualmente, menos del uno por ciento de la energía generada por el DWP proviene de fuentes solares. El carbón y el gas natural generan 76 por ciento de la energía producida por la agencia.

Potencialmente, cada 10 megawatts de energía solar podrían crear de 200 a 400 empleos, según la oficina del alcalde.

"Una de las respuestas más grandes que podemos dar a los retos económicos que estamos enfrentando ahora es emplear a gente para que reconstruya nuestra infraestructura", dijo la concejal Jan Perry, presidenta del comité de Energía y Medioambiente.