

## **Notions of a small town editor**

By Cheryl Lingo

Reedley Exponent Wednesday, February 4, 2009

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced the annual Burn Cleaner Wood Burning Device Change-out Program is starting earlier this year and with more incentive to make the change. The program offers a financial incentive to change out older, dirtier-burning stoves and heaters, up to \$1,500 toward the purchase of a cleaner-burning gas, pellet or certified wood stove or insert. You can contact the air district at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) for a list of participating retailers and more information on the program.

## **California farms, vineyards in peril from warming, U.S. energy secretary warns**

**'We're looking at a scenario where there's no more agriculture in California,' Steven Chu says. He sees education as a means to combat threat.**

By Jim Tankersley

L.A. Times, Wed., February 4, 2009

Reporting from Washington -- California's farms and vineyards could vanish by the end of the century, and its major cities could be in jeopardy, if Americans do not act to slow the advance of global warming, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu said Tuesday.

In his first interview since taking office last month, the Nobel-prize-winning physicist offered some of the starkest comments yet on how seriously President Obama's cabinet views the threat of climate change, along with a detailed assessment of the administration's plans to combat it.

Chu warned of water shortages plaguing the West and Upper Midwest and particularly dire consequences for California, his home state, the nation's leading agricultural producer.

In a worst case, Chu said, up to 90% of the Sierra snowpack could disappear, all but eliminating a natural storage system for water vital to agriculture.

"I don't think the American public has gripped in its gut what could happen," he said. "We're looking at a scenario where there's no more agriculture in California." And, he added, "I don't actually see how they can keep their cities going" either.

A pair of recent studies raise similar warnings. One, published in January in the journal *Science*, raised the specter of worldwide crop shortages as temperatures rise. Another, penned by UC Berkeley researchers last year, estimated California has about \$2.5 trillion in real estate assets -- including agriculture -- endangered by warming.

Chu is not a climate scientist. He won his Nobel for work trapping atoms with laser light. He taught at Stanford University and directed the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, where he reoriented researchers to pursue "clean energy" technologies to help reduce the use of greenhouse-gas-emitting fossil fuels in the U.S., before Obama tapped him to head the Energy Department.

He stressed the threat of climate change in his Senate confirmation hearings and in a video clip posted on Obama's transition website, but not as bluntly, nor in as dire terms, as he did Tuesday.

In the course of a half-hour interview, Chu made clear that he sees public education as a key part of the administration's strategy to fight global warming -- along with billions of dollars for alternative energy research and infrastructure, a national standard for electricity from renewable sources and cap-and-trade legislation to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

He said the threat of warming is keeping policymakers focused on alternatives to fossil fuel, even though gasoline prices have fallen over the last six months from historic highs. But he said public awareness needs to catch up. He compared the situation to a family buying an old house and being told by an inspector that it must pay a hefty sum to rewire it or risk an electrical fire that could burn everything down.

"I'm hoping that the American people will wake up," Chu said, and pay the cost of rewiring.

Environmentalists welcomed the comments as a sharp break from the Bush administration, which often minimized research about global warming.

"To say the least, it's a breath of fresh air," said Bernadette Del Chiaro, who directs the clean air and global warming program for Environment California. "We've been worried about the impacts of global warming for years, even decades. He's absolutely right -- California stands to lose so much in our way of life."

Global warming skeptics were not swayed. "I am hopeful Secretary Chu will take note of the real-world data, new studies and the growing chorus of international scientists that question his climate claims," Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), the top Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, said in a statement. "Computer model predictions of the year 2100 are simply not evidence of a looming climate catastrophe."

## **Oakland port truck pollution burdens public health, study says**

By Denis Cuff

In the Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, February 05, 2009

Air pollution from diesel trucks visiting the Port of Oakland places an economic burden on the Bay Area by increasing the risk of people getting sick; missing work, school and other activities; and even dying prematurely, according to a report commissioned by a coalition of labor and environmental groups.

The total estimated price tag of health impacts from the truck pollution is \$153 million a year — \$151 million of it from the risk that 18 premature deaths annually will occur in the region from the effects of truck exhaust, according to the report released Wednesday by two Oakland-based groups. The Pacific Institute, a research organization, and the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy prepared the report for the Coalition for Safe and Clean Ports, an alliance of environmental, community and labor groups.

According to statistical analysis in the new report, port truck pollution is also responsible annually for nine hospital admissions for respiratory problems, four admissions for heart problems, 284 asthma attacks, 23 cases of acute bronchitis, 1,650 lost work days, 5,042 days of missed school and 17,875 cases where people restricted activities because of pollution.

The highest risks, the study says, are to people closest to the truck pollution: West Oakland residents and the truck drivers.

"The basic unfairness here is that the owners of the goods being moved and the shippers are shifting their costs of doing business onto the community and port neighbors," said Jennifer Lin, research director for the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy. "These costs are preventable, though, if we can change the system of trucking at the port."

The report urges Oakland port commissioners to require trucking companies that use the port to make their drivers full-time employees, instead of hiring them as independent contractors. This would make the companies responsible for the steep cost of upgrading or replacing diesel trucks to slash pollution.

Most of the 1,500 truckers hauling freight in and out of the port are independent contractors who make less than \$11 per hour and cannot afford expensive upgrades, the study said.

The Port of Oakland is looking into requiring trucking companies to put their drivers on their payroll. Before making any decision, the port commission is awaiting results of a study expected next month on the economic impacts of the proposal, said Robert Bernardo, a port spokesman.

He said port officials had not had time to evaluate and comment on the health impact report.

Lin of the East Bay Alliance said her study was based largely on California Air Resources Board figures for impacts of port truck pollution statewide. She and other researchers pulled out

estimates for impacts in the Bay Area, then placed a price tag on them with costs commonly used by federal and state pollution regulators.

During a teleconference on the report Wednesday, Athena Applon, 26, of West Oakland said she thinks truck pollution has contributed to the asthma that she and 19 other family members have. "You can see all the black smoke as the trucks go by."

Representatives of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District said they had not had time to evaluate the new report but noted that the air district is pushing the port to speed up efforts to clean up trucks.

## **Another no burn day in Bay Area**

By Denis Cuff

In the Contra Costa Times and Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009

Air pollution regulators today issued an alert banning wood fires in the Bay Area for the second consecutive day because of poor air quality.

The Spare the Air alert bans wood fires in fireplaces, stoves, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits and other wood-burning devices from noon today through noon Thursday in nine counties

"Although the Bay Area is experiencing spring-like weather, particulate pollution has again reached unhealthy levels," said Jack Broadbent, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District executive officer.

For further information, visit [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org).

## **Duraflame sues over air district regulations**

By Reed Fujii

Stockton Record, Thursday, February 5, 2009

STOCKTON - Leading fire log manufacturer Duraflame Inc. is suing the Bay Area Air Quality Management District over regulations that restrict winter burning of the Stockton company's products and require new package labeling.

The lawsuit, filed in Contra Costa County Superior Court, charges the clean air agency failed to show fire logs pose the same pollution risk as burning wood and that its labeling rule is arbitrary.

Lisa Fasano, communication director for the air district, said the agency had received the lawsuit and that it was under review. However, district officials don't comment on pending litigation.

Chris Caron, Duraflame's vice president of brand development, said the air district failed to gather evidence or study the impact of its new rules as required under law.

"We don't believe we're being treated fairly in this regulatory process," he said.

For example, Caron said district officials did not test or consider results of tests of emissions from fire logs. Instead, it simply included them as a "solid fuel" together with firewood under a rule that makes them illegal to burn in household fireplaces and wood stoves during Spare the Air health advisories from November through February every year.

"We believe if they did that work, they would find our emissions are very insignificant," he said.

District officials said the rules were adopted July 9 to protect residents from the harmful effects of fine particulate matter, such as smoke.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District imposes similar restrictions on the use of wood-burning fireplaces and wood stoves.

Duraflame also objects to the air district requirement that packages of wood and manufactured fire logs carry a label that says: "Use of this and other solid fuels may be restricted at times by law. Please check 1-877-4NOBURN or [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org) before burning."

The telephone number and Web site advise whether the Bay Area air district has declared a no-burn day.

Caron said the agency failed to show such a label would have a positive effect on air quality and would be hard to provide only in the Bay Area.

"This labeling requirement is extremely burdensome on us, ... a manufacturer who distributes in a broader, multiregional area," he said. "It would be very confusing to consumers outside of the Bay Area to have that labeling on the package."

## **Campaign to Stop Coal Plant Pollution**

By Felicity Barringer

N.Y. Times, Thursday, February 5, 2009

The Justice Department said it was starting a campaign to "stop illegal pollution" from coal-fired power plants. At the same time, it filed suit against Westar Energy, charging that the company's 1,500-megawatt coal-fired Jeffrey Energy Center in northeastern Kansas had made major modifications to prolong its life, without installing controls as required. In 2004, the Bush administration filed notice that the plant, with high levels of smog-forming pollution and fine particles that make it one of the country's dirtiest, was potentially in violation of the Clean Air Act. But the final lawsuit was not filed until Wednesday, and the Kansas plant was one of very few put on notice in the last eight years. During that period, repeated efforts were made to loosen the pollution-control requirements for older plants that expand their operations, efforts largely blocked by Congress and the Supreme Court.

## **How toxic is your commute? New pollution study seeks answer**

By Pat Brennan, environment editor

OC Register, Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2009

The air pollution you breathe inside your car can be 10 times higher than what's outside, one reason a team of researchers plans to map pollution exposure over thousands of miles of commuter routes in Southern California.

UC Irvine epidemiologists Ralph Delfino and Jun Wu have received \$500,000 in funding from the state Air Resources Board for the study, which will set up pollution measuring equipment inside a variety of vehicles. The cars and trucks will then be driven through some of the worst commuter traffic Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Such studies have been done before, Delfino said, but this one stands apart because of its geographical scope and because the data will be used to create computer models of various commutes in order to estimate health effects.

Those, in turn, could be used for tailor-made predictions of pollution exposure based on where you drive, and when.

"The important thing about doing this study here in Southern California is that people commute a lot," Delfino said. "The average commute is something like an hour. So we're actually going to run up and down many of the freeways in the Southern California and Los Angeles area."

The researchers will be paying close attention to toxic organic pollutants and the fine particles that can work their way deeply into human tissues.

Exposure can vary depending on the age and type of car you drive, he said. Running the air conditioner, recirculating air and keeping windows up can help reduce exposure.

The study is expected to be completed within three years, and eventually could be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of air quality regulations.

## **San Diego to cruise ships: Slow down!**

By Gene Sloan

USA TODAY, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009

Sailing out of San Diego this spring? Get ready to sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery.

San Diego's Board of Port Commissioners this week unanimously voted to ask operators of cruise ships and other vessels sailing near the city to slow their speeds beginning March 1.

The port's new speed limit -- 15 knots for cruise ships; 12 knots for cargo ships -- will apply to a broad area extending 20 nautical miles from San Diego's Point Loma.

A statement from the port says the speed limit is aimed at reducing air pollution in the region. It cites studies that show ships emit less pollution when traveling at slower speeds.

The speed reduction is voluntary, but the port will encourage participation by tracking vessel speeds and issuing regular reports to the public on which ships are not complying. The port also is changing the way it assigns dock workers to ships to encourage participation.

The Port of San Diego is following in the footsteps of two other California ports that have added similar speed restrictions -- Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Among the ships sailing out of San Diego this year are the Carnival Elation and Spirit; Holland America Zaandam, Ryndam and Statendam; and the Celebrity Mercury.

## **Obama ordering energy-efficient standards**

By Ben Feller, Associated Press Writer

Modesto Bee and Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, February 5, 2009

WASHINGTON — Eager to show action on the energy front, President Barack Obama is ordering his government to put in place higher efficiency standards for everyday products such as dishwashers, lamps and microwave ovens.

Obama was to sign a presidential memorandum Thursday directing the Energy Department to get moving on energy standards for appliances, including a first batch he will order to be finalized by August. The fact that Obama is getting directly involved in speeding up household appliance standards underscores how much he wants to show quick, clear progress on energy - part of a broader campaign promise to deal with economic and energy concerns all at once.

Laws on the books already require new efficiency standards for household and commercial appliances. But they have been backlogged in a tangle of missed deadlines, bureaucratic disputes and litigation. In essence, Obama's intent is to say that legal deadlines must be met, with priority being given to those standards that are likely to yield the best pocketbook savings for consumers, according to administration aides familiar with the details of Obama's decision.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because the presidential memorandum had not yet been released. In addition to signing the document, Obama also planned to visit the Energy Department to talk to employees and make a pitch for how his economic jobs plan would help the energy sector.

Obama's memorandum would order final rules to be in place by August that require energy-efficiency standards for a series of products: residential dishwashers, lamps, ranges and ovens, microwave ovens, commercial air-conditioning equipment, commercial boilers and beverage vending machines.

His directive will ask the Energy Department to meet all deadlines in setting energy standards but to evaluate them in priority order and finish some ahead of schedule. Administration officials say the cumulative effect will be seen in cost savings, conserved energy and lower greenhouse-gas emissions blamed for global warming.

So far in his presidency, Obama also took a major step toward allowing California and other states to target greenhouse gases through more stringent auto emission standards. And he has also ordered new federal rules directing automakers to start making more fuel-efficient cars as required by law.

## **Study: 9/11 lung problems persist years later**

By Amy Westfeldt, The Associated Press

In the Hanford Sentinel, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009

NEW YORK - Researchers tracking Sept. 11 responders who became ill after working at the World Trade Center site found many had lung problems years later in a study the authors said proves persistent illness in people exposed to toxic dust caused by the twin towers' collapse.

The study by the Mount Sinai Medical Center's medical monitoring program examined more than 3,000 responders between 2004 and 2007, repeating exams conducted between the middle of 2002 and 2004.

Slightly more than 24 percent of the patients had abnormal lung function, the study found. In the earlier examinations, about 28 percent of the patients had similar results.

"We know people we are following are still sick. It's confirming what we've been seeing clinically," said Dr. Jacqueline M. Moline, who treats ailing responders and co-authored the study.

Experts have struggled since the 2001 attacks to find standards to define post-Sept. 11 illness and the time it would take to develop. The city's medical examiner recently added to the official victims' list a man who died in October of cancer and lung disease, citing his exposure to the dust cloud that enveloped the city when the 110-story towers collapsed.

Mount Sinai's program has treated more than 26,000 people who were at the site or worked there in the days after Sept. 11. The study's authors noted that participants asked to be enrolled in the program and may have more health problems than others who were exposed but didn't enroll.

But Norman H. Edelman, chief medical officer of the American Lung Association, said the study is "probably an important finding" of long-term post-Sept. 11 illness.

"The most reasonable explanation is that there's a subset of people who for whatever reason were more sensitive to the stuff that was inhaled," Edelman said.

The researchers tracked 3,160 people who took follow-up exams between September 2004 and December 2007; all had previous exams at least 18 months earlier.

The study appears in Thursday's editions of CHEST, a journal published by the American College of Chest Physicians.

On the Net: CHEST: <http://www.chestjournal.org/>

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses state of Arizona launches new daily air quality forecast website. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

### **Lanza Arizona portal en la Internet para consultar la calidad del aire durante el día**

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino  
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, February 05, 2009

Una asociación que integra a todas las ciudades del estado de Arizona lanzó un sitio en la red mundial del Internet dedicado a orientar y educar sobre la calidad del aire, los reglamentos y las sanciones que ameritan quienes contaminan el ambiente.

La página "Aire limpio; hagamos más" informa sobre las condiciones del aire que respiran los residentes de Arizona en cualquier momento del día.

El año pasado en Arizona cerca de 85 mil personas tuvieron que ser atendidas en salas de emergencia por problemas respiratorios, y unas 20 mil más necesitaron de intervenciones quirúrgicas.

El referido portal electrónico pide, entre otras cosas, conducir menos los vehículos, conservar electricidad y evitar el uso de maquinaria que consuma diesel.