

## **To keep warming low, deeper pollution cuts needed**

By Seth Borenstein, AP Science Writer

In the N.Y. Times, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Wednesday, April 29, 2009

WASHINGTON, (AP) -- If the world is going to limit global warming to just a few degrees, it has to slash carbon dioxide pollution much more than now being discussed, two new science studies say.

Carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels — coal, oil and natural gas — is the chief cause of global warming.

The studies found there's a limit to how much manmade carbon dioxide can be added to the air before warming exceeds an increase of 2 degrees Celsius or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit — the level that many governments have set as a goal. World average temperatures going higher than that may be dangerous, some scientists say.

To keep under that danger level, the world has to spew less than 1.1 trillion tons of carbon dioxide in the first half of the 21st Century, according to studies published in Thursday's edition of the journal *Nature*.

In the first nine years of the century, the world has already emitted one-third of that amount and is on pace to hit that trillion ton limit in just 20 years, said climate researcher Malte Meinshausen of Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and lead author of one of the studies.

Even if the world ducks under that emissions limit, there is still a 25 percent chance of temperatures exceeding the dangerous mark, he said.

President Barack Obama said he wants to cut U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide by 80 percent. That is a "good start but it's not enough to limit warming," said Bill Hare, a study co-author who is also at the Potsdam Institute.

Assuming that other countries cut their per-person emission levels to match the United States, the United States has to cut its overall pollution by 90 to 95 percent to keep the world from exceeding the 1.1 trillion ton mark, Hare said.

Cutting emissions means not burning as much fossil fuels, leaving about three quarters of the known reserves in the ground, the study authors said.

"Not much at all of coal reserves can be burnt and still keep below" the 3.6 degrees of warming, Hare said.

World emissions must start dropping by 2015, otherwise cuts will have to be too draconian, Meinshausen said.

The studies, which used computer models, take a different approach than other research on figuring out how much carbon dioxide in the air is too much. Instead of the proportion of carbon dioxide in the air at any given time, they looked at the total amount spewed out over many decades to arrive at a tipping point of 1.1 trillion tons.

Stephen Schneider of Stanford University who paints a worst case scenario for global warming in a commentary in the journal, said the studies make it seem like scientists know where there's a solid danger line for emissions, when they don't. The papers acknowledge there is a 25 percent chance the limit should be lower. Schneider said that's a pretty big risk when the consequences of being wrong are severe.

"If you had a 25 percent chance that walking into a room would give you serious flu, would you?" Schneider asked.

## **America's Most Polluted Cities**

By Rebecca Ruiz, Forbes.com

Yahoo Real Estate Website, April, 29, 2009

This time of year, many Americans are concerned with sunburns. In some areas, they should pay more attention to smog.

The reason? Though invisible, air pollution is a threat to 186 million Americans, according to a new report released by the American Lung Association.

The annual report--State of the Air 2009--found that six in 10 Americans live in counties where ozone or particle pollution has reached dangerous levels. Both types of pollution can be deadly and have been linked to respiratory conditions like asthma, emphysema and bronchitis, and there is also evidence that particle pollution increases risk of heart attacks and strokes.

In compiling this list, the American Lung Association ranked U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) --geographic entities defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for use by federal agencies in collecting, tabulating and publishing federal statistics -- using the highest weighted average for any county within that MSA. Grading was based on the Environmental Protection Agency's determination of violations of the national ambient air quality standard. Though overall air pollution is down compared to previous years, the problem is still widespread. Visalia and Fresno, two mid-size towns in central California, ranked high for short-term and year-round particle pollution. Birmingham, Ala., and Cincinnati were listed in the top 10 of metro areas with unhealthy levels of year-round particle pollution. In the Southwest, the Houston, Dallas and Phoenix metro areas had high ozone levels.

Residents of Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Calif., and Pittsburgh, Pa., might want to pay close attention to the ALA's rankings. These metro areas were deemed the most polluted in the nation. The Los Angeles metro area--known for its thick smog--ranks this year as the most ozone-polluted. Pollutants produced by car exhaust and smokestacks form the raw ingredients for the production of ozone.

Nearby Bakersfield, Calif., ranked as the city with the most year-round particle pollution and had ozone levels second only to Los Angeles. The Pittsburgh metro area, an industrial hub in eastern Pennsylvania, had the highest short-term particle pollution and the second highest year-round levels. Short-term and year-round particle counts reflect the amount of tiny solid and liquid particles in the air, most often emitted from gasoline-powered vehicles, steel mills and power plants, among other sources.

It's an unenviable distinction, but also a serious public health issue, says Dr. Norman H. Edelman, chief medical officer for the ALA.

"As of now, half of Americans live in an area where they are at risk," he says. Federal and state governments are working to improve air quality, and such efforts were recently bolstered by increased funding in the stimulus package. But short of moving to Fargo, N.D., Lincoln, Neb., or Honolulu, Hawaii, or one of the other towns and cities ranked as the cleanest by the ALA, Americans have few choices but understanding and avoiding risks in affected areas.

### **Air Quality and Your Health**

Many Americans fail to realize they're exposed to unhealthy air pollution levels or confuse ozone pollution symptoms like a runny nose, cough and watery eyes with allergies or a cold. Worse yet, there are no diagnostic tests that indicate heightened risk.

"Ozone gets into your airway and doesn't leave a trace," says Edelman. Researchers believe that inhaling ozone is similar to breathing cigarette smoke, which burns the airway and causes inflammation in the lungs and blood vessels. Such inflammation can lead to respiratory and cardiac conditions.

Unlike ozone pollution, which causes immediate but less benign symptoms, particle pollution is silent until manifested through long-term conditions like emphysema and asthma. It has also been linked to heart attacks, strokes and increased mortality.

Edelman recommends avoiding the outdoors when the air quality has been measured as unsafe. This is particularly important for at-risk populations which include children and those with respiratory conditions. Several government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Weather Service, maintain AirNow, a Web site that tracks pollution monitors placed across the country.

In 2008, the threshold for dangerous ozone levels was lowered from .08 parts per million to .075 ppm. The shift means that nearly 83 million more Americans are considered to live in counties where ozone monitors registered too many unhealthy days of air pollution.

### **Cleaning Up the Air**

This has not escaped the attention of the current administration, which allocated \$300 million in stimulus funds for state and federal programs clean diesel programs. Lydia Wegman, director of health environmental impacts division at the EPA, says that such efforts have improved in recent years as state and local agencies "have developed a lot more knowledge of strategies for controlling air pollution."

Despite its top ranking on ALA's list, Wegman cites Los Angeles as a leading example. In 2006, the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports adopted a long-term plan to reduce particulate matter pollution by targeting diesel vehicles.

Sam Atwood, a spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District in the Los Angeles area, says taming pollution has proved difficult since the area's two ports handle 40% of the country's foreign imports. Trucks and trains are then put into action in transporting those goods, leading to further air pollution. Emissions created by the area's 16 million residents and 11 million vehicles are another major consideration as is the warm weather, which tends to trap pollution close to the ground.

Despite those challenges, Los Angeles has slowly improved its ozone and year-round particle pollution levels in the past decade. By 2010, California will also have reduced its diesel emissions by nearly 75% as compared to 2000 levels, according to Mike Scheible, deputy executive officer of the state's Air Resources Board.

To be sure, there is significant economic incentive for improving air quality. A study done in 2007 by the South Coast Air Quality Management District found that achieving federal air quality standards in the Los Angeles area would cost \$2.3 billion per year, but save \$14.6 billion. That figure reflects a range of annual costs, including crop damage, lost work days, and premature deaths.

### **Top 5 Cities for Ozone Pollution**

1. Pittsburgh-New Castle, PA
2. Fresno-Madera, CA
3. Bakersfield, CA
4. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside, CA
5. Birmingham-Hoover-Cullman, AL

### **BLM, Forest Service sued over air pollution in NM**

By Susan Montoya Bryan - Associated Press Writer

In the Modesto Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Wednesday, April 29, 2009

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- Environmentalists claim in a lawsuit that federal agencies violated the law by approving plans that would expand oil and gas development in New Mexico's San Juan Basin - one of the nation's largest natural gas fields.

WildEarth Guardians, Dine (di-NEH') Citizens Against Ruining our Environment and Carson Forest Watch filed the lawsuit Wednesday in federal court in Albuquerque.

They say the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management decisions allowing for more drilling should be thrown out because they failed to properly account for the impact on air pollution.

BLM official Tony Herrell says the agency prepared an environmental impact statement and an air quality model. The Forest Service did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

### **LA judge's ruling halts some clean truck rules**

The Associated Press  
In the Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, April 29, 2009

LOS ANGELES -- A federal judge on Wednesday temporarily halted several requirements of a plan to reduce pollution at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, including a mandate for independent drivers to become employees of trucking companies.

U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder issued her final decision two days after making a tentative ruling on the Clean Trucks Program, which is designed to curb diesel emission at the nation's busiest port complex by phasing out 17,000 old trucks.

The American Trucking Associations filed a lawsuit to temporarily halt parts of the program, including the requirement that big-rig drivers at the Port of Los Angeles become employees of trucking companies no later than the end of 2012.

An ATA spokesman said the group is happy with the judge's ruling. The ATA has argued that the ports cannot require companies to hire drivers as direct employees because it would stop independent truckers - the majority of whom haul cargo in and out of the ports - from working the harbor.

A call to a Port of Los Angeles spokeswoman was not immediately returned Wednesday afternoon.

Last July, Snyder refused to issue an injunction against the new requirements because of a loophole in federal law that allows states to impose safety requirements on trucks. Last month, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals found the rules had little to do with vehicle safety. The appeals court ruled that a temporary injunction should be granted on the ports' program and remanded the case to District Court.

Snyder's latest ruling will not block the ports from enforcing several provisions of the program, including a requirement that trucks meet stringent emission regulations. Cargo owners must still pay a container fee to help pay for the purchase of new trucks.

The trial is scheduled to begin in December.

### **Judge blocks part of ports' clean-truck program Truckers may stay independent at Los Angeles and Long Beach ports, preliminary injunction says. Old, polluting diesel rigs can still be banned.**

By Ronald D. White, staff writer  
L.A. Times, Thursday, April 30, 2009

In a victory for independent truckers, a federal judge on Wednesday blocked part of a program to cut diesel emissions by phasing out 17,000 old big rigs at the nation's busiest port complex.

U.S. District Judge Christina Snyder's preliminary injunction halted some new rules, including one that prohibits drivers at the Port of Los Angeles from being independent contractors. That was a provision sought by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

But supporters of the nation's most ambitious effort to clean the air around a major seaport complex said that the most important part of the plan -- bringing in newer and cleaner trucks -- would proceed.

"We are still banning older trucks and collecting the clean-truck fee to fund replacement trucks," said Richard D. Steinke, executive director of the Port of Long Beach. "That allows us to achieve our goal of cleaning the air and protecting the health of our community."

Villaraigosa said he was "pleased that the heart of the clean-truck program is in place and we're moving full steam ahead with removing dirty diesel trucks from our communities and harmful pollutants from our air."

Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Geraldine Knatz said the port was "committed to implementing the most sustainable program possible."

Some major issues remain unresolved.

Left for consideration is just how much of the ports' original plan can be used to decide which trucking companies and independent operators may ply their trade at the ports.

Snyder called a halt to the Port of Los Angeles' plan to require all independent drivers to become employees of trucking companies with concession agreements and to the Port of Long Beach's stipulation that concessionaires prove that they have informed drivers about available health insurance programs. Also left undecided is whether the ports will have to return concession fees that have already been collected.

Some said that the effort to clean the air at the ports could suffer significant delays. That's in part because there are doubts about whether independent drivers can earn enough to replace their older rigs.

"Without the employee program, port cleanup goals could be severely delayed because most independent owner-operators cannot afford to maintain and repair their trucks," the Natural Resources Defense Council said in a statement.

But some independent drivers have said that they prefer the freedom to set their own hours and pace of work, which they would lose if they were forced to become employees.

### **Group: Undo hospital's expansion permits**

By Tanya Mannes Union-Tribune Staff Writer

San Diego Union-Tribune, Thursday, April 30, 2009

ENCINITAS — A neighbor of Scripps Memorial Hospital Encinitas has filed an appeal seeking to overturn its expansion permits.

The Encinitas Planning Commission voted April 2 to award permits for the first major upgrade of the city's only hospital in 16 years. The hospital, on Santa Fe Drive just west of Interstate 5, plans a \$200 million expansion that would add new buildings dedicated to critical care and acute care, an 883-space parking garage, and a medical office building.

Diane Bond, who lives on Devonshire Drive next to the hospital, appealed the permits on behalf of her community group, Neighbors of Scripps Encinitas, which she said represents 20 to 30 people. The Encinitas City Council will consider it May 13.

"We feel we're being very reasonable," Bond said. "There are a lot of flaws with the environmental impact report, despite what the city staff and the hospital officials say."

Timothy Collins, chief operating executive for Scripps Memorial, said that Bond's appeal raises issues that are resolved in the permits.

"We have already committed to all those conditions that were contained within the appeal," Collins said.

Since the hospital applied for permits in 2006, neighbors have expressed concerns that the expansion would increase traffic on Devonshire Drive.

However, the environmental studies for the project concluded that traffic would not significantly worsen in surrounding neighborhoods. Another concern is that having paid parking on site will cause patients and employees to park on residential streets.

The appeal contends that the environmental impact report lacks a thorough analysis of traffic, scenic views, lighting, air quality and other issues. It also challenges the hospital's need for a medical office building and hospital officials' decisions about the site layout.

Bond is asking the City Council to revoke the permits or add conditions to them. She wants the hospital to act more quickly on several neighborhood improvements – such as placing power

lines underground, building a wall along Devonshire, and installing traffic signals or speed bumps – that are planned as part of the expansion.

Bond wants the city to withhold occupancy permits for the new buildings until the neighborhood improvements are complete.

Collins said that while the hospital has committed to make those improvements, it wouldn't make sense to do them before other elements of the project.

"We've done everything they're asking," Collins said. "It's just an issue of timing."

Bond also is asking the City Council to eliminate a planned toll booth at an entrance from Melba Road. Collins said the hospital already compromised with neighbors by agreeing to close it at dusk.

The current medical facilities measure 333,380 square feet. The expansion will add 250,430 square feet of hospital space and a rooftop helicopter pad. It will increase Scripps Memorial's inpatient beds to 226 from 138 and emergency room beds to 27 from 12.

The project includes retrofitting existing buildings to meet looming state earthquake standards.

[Washington Post Column, Thursday, April 30, 2009:](#)

### **For the Summer Barbecue, Some Meats Are Greener Than Others**

By Nina Shen Rastogi

*Green Lantern, you're always telling us how bad meat is for the environment. I'm willing to throw some more zucchini kebabs on my barbecue this summer, but are all meats equally awful? Or are there some that I can grill with a little less guilt?*

The Lantern loves her roasts and rib-eyes, too, but she's glad the message is starting to sink in: Meat is not sweet, ecologically speaking. According to an extensive United Nations report from 2006, the livestock industry not only uses more land than any other human activity, it's also one of the largest contributors to water pollution and a [bigger source of greenhouse-gas emissions than all the world's trains, planes and automobiles combined](#).

You can do a lot for the planet simply by cutting back your overall meat intake. Food writer Michael Pollan recently suggested that if Americans went meatless one night a week, it would be equivalent to taking "30 to 40 million cars off the road for a year." When you do decide to eat meat, though, you can make a difference by making more responsible selections.

As a general rule, red meat -- beef, lamb, goat and bison -- are the worst offenders. A recent report for Britain's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs compared common animal products across seven categories: use of energy, pesticides, land and nonrenewable resources; and impacts on global warming, acidification and eutrophication (a kind of water pollution in which excess nutrients lead to fish-killing algae blooms). Beef and lamb got the poorest marks of all meats in terms of energy usage, global warming and eutrophication. Beef also used the most land, caused the most acidification and came close to the bottom in the remaining categories. Lamb did better, though -- in fact, it came out the best of all meats in terms of pesticide and nonrenewable resource usage. Overall, chicken and turkey were the greenest meats surveyed.

Cows, sheep and other ruminants end up looking so bad in part because they eat a lot more, pound for pound, than their single-stomach brethren: That means more fertilizers, more pesticides and more energy are required to grow their food. (The livestock industry as a whole consumes a whopping share of the world's crops -- at least 80 percent of all soybeans and more than half of all corn.) One bright side: Ruminants' hardy stomachs can digest cellulose, which means they can graze on grassland other animals can't.

Cattle, at least, also produce more poop than other livestock. A typical cow might drop 22,000 pounds of patties a year. Assuming a high yield of 625 pounds of edible meat, that's about 35 pounds of manure incurred per pound of saleable beef. Chickens, by contrast, come in at about

24 pounds of manure per pound; hogs, around 17.5. Animal manure doesn't just stink; it also releases air-polluting ammonia, nitrous oxide and methane, and can threaten groundwater supplies. (Manure does make an excellent fertilizer, but large farms can end up with more waste than the land can absorb.) Plus, cows and sheep emit plenty of extra methane when they belch and fart. The U.N. report estimates that most of the methane produced by livestock, which accounts for about 37 percent of all anthropogenic methane emissions, comes from gassy ruminants.

What does that all add up to? According to a study published last year in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, the production of red meat generates, on average, four times as many greenhouse-gas emissions as an equivalent amount of chicken or fish, and it turns out more carbon dioxide than an equivalent amount of any other food group. Red meat is so resource-intensive that if we all cut our consumption of it by one-quarter, the reduction in greenhouse gases would be the same as shifting to a 100 percent locally sourced diet.

The authors of that study included pork in their red meat figures. In general, though, pig meat is greener than beef, mutton or other ruminant meats. For one thing, pigs don't expel methane from their digestive tracts throughout the day. They also reproduce more efficiently: Although a cow or sheep may give birth to a single offspring a year, a sow typically has 20 to 30, meaning fewer resources are expended on breeding stock. Finally, pigs take a lot less time -- and therefore less feed -- to reach their market weight. It takes about five to six pounds of feed to produce a pound of edible pork; you'd need about twice as much to produce a pound of beef.

Poultry and eggs come out best of all. Chickens breed furiously (a single bird can produce hundreds of chicks annually) and are highly efficient weight gainers. A recent independent life cycle analysis on U.S. poultry found that producing a calorie of chicken protein required about 5.6 calories of fossil fuels, compared with reported figures of about 14 calories for pork and 20 to 40 for beef. Still, chicken is the most widely eaten meat in America, and its farming has a major impact on the environment. The poultry-broiler industry consumed some 240 billion megajoules of energy in 2005, or the equivalent of 42 million barrels of crude oil. That's more than the entire country of Sri Lanka consumed the same year -- all to keep us well-stocked with wings and drumsticks.

[Merced Sun-Star, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, April 30, 2009](#)

### **Letter: Reasons to worry about Wal-Mart**

Editor: My wife and I are very concerned about the building of the Wal-Mart distribution center in Merced for several reasons.

True, jobs will be created, but Wal-Mart is known for its relationship with its workers.

They are anti-union with low wages and poor health-care benefits that could lead to a financial problem for our county.

We are especially concerned about the tremendous amount of truck traffic at the interchange that will also be used by students, professors and guests who will be traveling to UC Merced.

As teachers have undoubtedly informed you, the asthma problems with children in their classrooms is very high.

Truck traffic is to blame for many of the hazardous pollutants in our air. We must seriously consider their health when considering Wal-Mart. It truly is a problem and not a myth.

Lastly, most of the profits from Wal-Mart go back to Arkansas and its billionaire families; how about attracting businesses here whose profits stay in our county?

*Charles and Sally Magneson, Ballico*

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, April 30, 2009:](#)

### **'We must act now'**

There is an outcry, mainly from the business industrial sector, expressing a concern about the negative impact on the economy caused by the EPA's proposal to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act.

The proposal represents a complete reversal by the Obama EPA from the Bush administration's stubborn stance on climate change. Some [letter April 22] even lament sarcastically whether there will be regulation on breathing since breathing also produces carbon dioxide, which is the most dominant greenhouse gas.

Of course, any new regulation will have an impact on the economy, but the long-term consequences caused by inaction will be many times more serious than the short-term economic impact. And much worse, the apocalyptic outcome of global warming on our water supply and thus our agricultural economy cannot be reversed.

A recent study by Fresno State has shown that a few degrees of warming could reduce our annual streamflow by as much as 39%. Even if the precipitation remains unchanged, the loss of storage in the snowpack could shift the stream runoff peaks earlier by 16 to 52 days. That would mean floods in the winter and drought in the summer.

We must act now to significantly reduce greenhouse gases if we wish to avoid an economic disaster.

*John Suen, Fresno*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Sierra Club celebrates President Obama's environmental achievements. He has done more for clean energy in 100 days in office than what has been done in 3 decades. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Sierra Club elogia logros ambientales del presidente Obama**

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino  
Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, April 30, 2009

La organización ambientalista, Sierra Club elogió los alcances que consiguió el presidente Barack Obama en el rubro de la protección al medio ambiente, en sus primeros cien días de gobierno. Josh Dorner es vocero nacional de Sierra Club: "Sería difícil sobrevalorar el trabajo que el presidente Obama ha logrado en sólo cien días", dijo, en relación a todos los frentes de la protección ambiental. La organización resume en una frase los avances del presidente: "Ha hecho más en cien días que lo que se ha hecho en tres décadas, en energía limpia". Otra organización, el Concilio Nacional para la Defensa de los Recursos Naturales, coincidió con Sierra Club.