

## **Bay Area lucks out while Santa Cruz chokes on smoke from coastal fires**

By Paul Rogers

In the Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

Smoke from the Lockheed fire in Santa Cruz County has choked the coast with unhealthy levels of soot for days. But because the wind has blown it south, rather than east, the Bay Area has largely avoided the hazy unpleasantness.

The difference is dramatic.

On Friday, there was nine times as much soot in the air in the city of Santa Cruz than in San Jose. As winds changed and the fire waned Monday, that difference shrunk to twice as much soot.

Santa Cruz health officials continued to urge coastal residents to avoid long periods outdoors for the next few days, particularly people with respiratory problems.

"We have seen a lot of elderly and younger people with asthma. They are having shortness of breath, eyes burning, that sort of thing," said Kay McGraw, director of emergency services at Dominican Hospital in Santa Cruz.

"We're telling people to try and stay inside and keep the windows closed," McGraw said.

Bay Area residents were faring much better.

At the worst point on Monday in San Jose, at 11 a.m., levels of airborne soot, or particulate matter 2.5 microns or larger, as atmospheric scientists call it, hit 36 micrograms per cubic meter. That's about double the particulate levels that were in San Jose's air before the fire began.

But Santa Cruz on Monday was at 66. And on Friday, while San Jose had a reading of 17, Santa Cruz hit 162, the worst air quality of the year for Surf City, blanketing the coast with a gritty haze.

"Friday it was really, really bad. The smoke was horrible driving home. I couldn't open the windows in my car or at home. Everywhere it smelled like somebody was burning wood," said Karleen Munos, manager of Buccaneer Gifts on the Santa Cruz Wharf.

"I've lived here my whole life and never seen it this bad."

The worst has been in the morning hours.

"The smoke plume hitches a ride. When the fog comes in, the smoke is pushed to the land. When the fog burns off, the smoke dissipates more," said Richard Stedman, a spokesman for the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

In the Bay Area, the smoke levels during the fire haven't even exceeded levels in January and February, when particle concentrations in San Jose, San Francisco and the East Bay were as much as three times higher because of smoke from residential fireplaces on cold winter nights.

That all could change, however, if the wind suddenly shifts — which forecasters Monday said is unlikely — or if another fire breaks out on the inland side of the coast range.

"So far, we've been lucky," said Eric Stephenson, air monitoring manager for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District in San Francisco.

The Lockheed fire was 80 percent contained by Monday evening, with state fire officials predicting full containment by Thursday. Low clouds Monday morning left dew on many lawns in Santa Cruz, helping the fire fighters.

No homes had burned in the fire, which had charred 7,017 acres.

About 2,200 residents of Bonny Doon were allowed to return home, but 500 Swanton residents still were kept away. A total of 2,172 firefighters were battling the blaze, whose suppression costs have reached \$12 million. The cause of the fire, which started near a Lockheed Martin facility at the end of Empire Grade Road, remains under investigation.

The Bay Area may have escaped the smoke of this fire, but last year, Bay Area residents were gagged in late June when smoke from more than 2,000 blazes ignited by a freak lightning storm raged across the northern part of the state.

Then, soot levels in the Bay Area reached the levels that they are in Santa Cruz and the Salinas Valley this week.

"Without a doubt, this is the worst smoke of the year here along the coast," Stedman said. "It's a frustrating situation. There's very little we can do to control it."

## **Scorching August is on back burner**

By Robert Krier, Union-Tribune Staff Writer  
San Diego Union-Tribune, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

If these are the dog days of summer, the dogs have been resting comfortably and won't be panting in the usual August heat anytime soon.

Low clouds and fog, frequent visitors in the spring but fairly rare in the middle of summer, are expected to reappear at the beaches and continue making forays into the inland valleys. That should leave temperatures around the county this week where they've been since early August: a few degrees below normal.

"It's not unheard of, but it's not common to see such an extensive marine-layer presence in the middle of August," National Weather Service forecaster Phil Gonsalves said.

Not since Aug. 5 has San Diego's official high temperature at Lindbergh Field reached 77 degrees, normal for the city the first half of the month. Even the nighttime lows, which have been in the mid-60s, have been a couple of degrees below normal.

The inland valleys have been in the low to mid-80s — not exactly frigid but a welcome break from the heat often felt this time of year. Ramona yesterday had a high of 85; the normal high on Aug. 17 is 91. The weather service expects inland highs to stay in the 80s the rest of the week.

"I'm not complaining," Gonsalves said. "To me, this is the perfect summer."

Only slight variations are forecast for the marine layer, both in how far it reaches inland and how quickly it burns off, Gonsalves said. The later the fog dissipates, the cooler the days will be.

Lower temperatures alone won't necessarily put firefighters at ease. Capt. Kurt Zingheim of Cal Fire said several other factors influence fire behavior, such as wind speeds, topography and fuel.

"It can be a combination of things," Zingheim said. "We can even get large fires in the middle of winter."

Some of the smoke from fires burning north of Santa Barbara has drifted over the region the past few days, adding to the foggy, hazy sky. But wind patterns have kept the smoke, which should be dissipating as the week progresses, mostly in the upper atmosphere.

Five air-monitoring stations around the county have not detected an increase in particulates at ground level from the smoke, said Bill Brick, senior meteorologist for the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District.

"It will make the sunsets prettier," Gonsalves said. "That will be about the extent of our experience with it."

The weekend could bring slightly warmer and clearer weather, but a return to the pattern of relatively cool and comfortable conditions is expected early next week, Gonsalves said.

The expression "dog days of summer" actually doesn't refer to lethargic canines slowed by hot weather. "Dog days" is a reference to Sirius, the Dog Star, which rises with the sun this time of year. Some ancient Greeks and Romans thought the star combined with the sun to create stifling summer heat.

San Diegans should remember that there could be plenty of howling hot weather in the months ahead. The 12 hottest days in city history have all come during the months of September and October

### **Conn. warns of bad air quality Monday, Tuesday**

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

HARTFORD, Conn.—Connecticut health officials are warning some people to limit outdoor activities because of unhealthy air quality.

The Department of Environmental Protection says elevated concentrations of ground-level ozone pollution are expected to make the air quality poor Monday afternoon through Tuesday. Air quality is expected to improve Wednesday.

The DEP says groups that may be sensitive to ozone include people with respiratory diseases, and children and adults who are active outdoors.

Officials say air in the state has dropped to unhealthy levels only four days this year because of the wet, cool weather this summer.

The DEP is also recommending that people take steps to avoid pollution, including carpooling and not mowing lawns.

### **Air regulators to audit Navajo equipment**

The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

FARMINGTON, N.M.—The New Mexico Environment Department will test air monitoring equipment at five locations on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico and Arizona at the request of the tribe.

The review will ensure the sites take accurate air quality samples.

The state agency will check air quality monitoring equipment at Shiprock and Crownpoint in New Mexico and at Tuba City, Fort Defiance and Nazlini in Arizona.

The sites are maintained by the Navajo Environmental Protection Agency, which does independent studies of air quality on the reservation.

A Navajo EPA environmental program supervisor, Charlene Nelson, says the annual review of the air monitoring sites will double-check quality control work that's already been done.

She says a third-party review ensures reliable measurements.

### **Chinese mayor apologizes for lead poisoning**

By David Wivell, Associated Press Writer

In the Contra Costa times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Tuesday, August 18, 2009

CHANGQING, China—A mayor apologized to residents of two Chinese villages where more than 600 children were sickened by lead poisoning, saying a nearby smelter targeted by angry protests would not reopen until it meets health standards, state media said Tuesday.

Authorities have promised to relocate hundreds of families within two years, the official Xinhua News Agency said, but residents were not reassured.

"If they relocate us to these nearby places, who can guarantee that our babies will be safe?" said farmer Deng Xiaoyan, a resident of Sunjianantou, one of the affected villages. She said a recent test showed her 3-year-old daughter had high levels of lead.

Environmental problems have escalated as China's economy booms, sometimes prompting violent protests. Counting on lax enforcement of regulations, some companies find it easier and cheaper to dump poisons into rivers and the ground rather than dispose of them safely.

At least 615 of 731 children in two villages near the Dongling Lead and Zinc Smelting Co. plant in Shaanxi province's Changqing town have tested positive for lead poisoning. Some had lead levels 10 times the level China considers safe.

Lead poisoning can damage the nervous and reproductive systems and cause high blood pressure, anemia and memory loss. It is especially harmful to young children, pregnant women and fetuses, and that damage is usually irreversible, according to the World Health Organization.

The mayor of Baoji city, which oversees Changqing, arrived at the plant Monday as hundreds of villagers were protesting, tearing down fences and blocking traffic outside the factory, Xinhua reported. Dai Zhengshe apologized and said the plant will not be allowed to open again until it meets health standards, the report said.

Villagers had been enraged by the plant's defiance of the Aug. 6 order to suspend operations, Xinhua said. Fighting between angry parents and scores of police broke out Sunday, and trucks delivering coal to the plant were stoned.

The mayor said the plant halted production only on Monday because of safety reasons. "We had to make sure the gas in the pipeline was exhausted before the plant was finally shut down," Dai said in the Xinhua report.

A man surnamed Ma who lives in Madaokou—the other of the badly affected villages, about 500 yards (meters) from the factory—said residents believed at least two villagers were taken from their homes by police Monday night. He said the Baoji city government sent officials to his village Tuesday to try to pacify residents.

"They wanted to persuade us not to cause trouble, but they didn't provide any solution to our problems," Ma said by telephone.

Associated Press journalists saw no sign of workers at the factory Tuesday, while about 50 police officers guarded the compound. Another 50 sat in police buses. The windows of the factory's reception area and security office were shattered.

A few hundred children were being tested Tuesday for lead poisoning in a third village, Luobosi.

Dr. Pascal Haefliger, a health and environment expert with the World Health Organization in Geneva, said lead stays in the body for years after exposure and continues to affect brain development and the nervous system in growing children.

"Medical treatment exists, but will not be successful in removing all the lead from the body," he said.

Xinhua said authorities have promised to relocate hundreds of families within two years, with the building of new homes about 3 miles (5 kilometers) from the plant starting last week.

Deng, the farmer, cradled her daughter and said she thought those houses would still be too close.

"There is lead in the air, the air is polluted, everything is polluted," she said.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses China, the most polluted nation in the world of carbon dioxide in the world will reach its limit in 2030. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

## **El máximo emisor de dióxido de carbono del mundo alcanzará su tope en 2030**

El Periodico de Mexico, August 18, 2009

Pekín, (EFE).- China, el país más contaminante del mundo en dióxido de carbono enviado a la atmósfera, alcanzará el tope de emisiones alrededor de 2030, según un panel de expertos de la

Comisión Nacional de Reforma y Desarrollo (NDRC), el máximo órgano de planificación económica.

El informe asegura que el Gobierno chino está "en el buen camino" para lograr un crecimiento más sostenible que mantenga el auge económico y una mayor eficiencia energética.

Según el documento, sólo disponible en mandarín y titulado "Informe China 2050 Energía y Emisiones de CO2", China seguirá incrementando sus emisiones de dióxido de carbono en la próxima década, sufrirán un frenazo después de 2020 y alcanzarán su punto máximo hacia 2030.

Se trata de la primera ocasión en que un organismo controlado por las autoridades chinas revela el futuro de las emisiones de CO2 en la que es la tercera economía mundial.

El panel de expertos animó a Pekín a seguir investigando en tecnologías para reducir el efecto invernadero.

"Sólo usando tecnologías avanzadas de bajo índice de carbono, China puede lograr el tope de emisiones de efecto invernadero hacia 2030. Si no, el pico se retrasará y no queremos asistir al escenario que supondría", expuso Jiang Kejun, economista del grupo de expertos que elaboró el informe.

En este sentido, Jiang apostó por insistir en las energías nucleares, eólicas e hidroeléctricas, "que deberían ser un objetivo estratégico a perseguir por el Gobierno chino".

El economista añadió que si China cumple sus planes, para 2050 las emisiones de CO2 "pueden caer a los niveles de 2005, o más".

El cálculo del grupo de expertos es que el gigante asiático, el máximo contaminante por CO2 del mundo tras superar en 2008 a EU, debe invertir anualmente 146,300 millones de dólares, (103,700 millones de euros) para conseguir sus metas.

China ha sido largamente criticada por la comunidad internacional por no sumarse al Protocolo de Kyoto para limitar las emisiones de CO2 y, por ello, se antoja crucial los esfuerzos para lograr que el acuerdo que le suceda (Kyoto expira en 2012) sea viable.

Bajo las actuales normas, China, como economía emergente, no está obligada a cuantificar cuotas de emisión de gases de efecto invernadero, cláusula que Pekín se resiste a modificar argumentando que su tasa de CO2 por habitante es mucho menor que la de los países desarrollados.