

## **Sixth birth-defect case confirmed in Kettleman City**

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010

Kings County health officials say they have confirmed the sixth birth-defect case out of Kettleman City from the 13-month period between September 2007 and November 2008.

The acknowledgment came today in the wake of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's announcement late last Friday directing state agencies to investigate mounting health concerns in the small farmworker community in southwest Kings County.

Previously, the official estimate of birth defects during that time was five out of 63 live births.

Kings County Health Director Keith Winkler said the discovery of the sixth case was recent, although he could not elaborate how recent it was.

The new information was not immediately reported to the public because the pending state investigation may turn up more cases, he said.

"We felt that the state would eventually do their investigation and may reveal more cases, so we left it to the state to come up with that," Winkler said.

## **New Friday deadline looming for Port of Oakland truckers**

By Cecily Burt, Oakland Tribune

Contra Costa Times & Tri-Valley Herald, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010

Port of Oakland truckers are facing another deadline: They have until Friday to line up financing to pay for diesel filters or new trucks to comply with the state's strict air quality rules that went into effect Jan. 1.

Drivers who are not able to purchase the new equipment will not be able to haul cargo at the Port after Feb. 15, but organizations who are offering low-cost loans to pay for the filters say they have received fewer applications than they expected.

About 1,300 drivers who haul cargo for the Port were denied grant funding for filters and trucks last year when a \$22 million fund ran out. Drivers who could not afford to pay for their own equipment were facing unemployment until the state Air Resources Board announced over the New Year's holiday that it had found \$11 million to help the rejected grantees buy new trucks or filters.

According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which is administering the grants for the filter retrofit programs, 742 truckers qualified for \$5,000 filter grants and 44 truckers qualified for \$50,000 new truck grants, said Lisa Fasano, the district spokeswoman.

More than 500 truckers who were eligible for the new grant funds never reapplied, but no one knows why.

Cascade Sierra Solutions, a nonprofit helping truckers whose income and credit ratings do not qualify for conventional loans, has taken in 255 applications so far. Some of the applications have been submitted by drivers who are eligible for \$5,000 grants that will be used to help pay for new filters, which average \$16,000, but some of applicants are not receiving any grant moneys, said Sharon Banks, executive director of CSS.

It's possible that some drivers who thought they would be out of work on Jan. 1 decided to find a different line of work, or perhaps they secured loans or leases through other companies.

Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums and his staff have been working to try and obtain federal grant funds to help the truckers, including a possible grant from the Department of Labor.

Banks said she is also working with other lenders to help the truckers get credit, since her organization does not have enough funds to handle it all. She said it is imperative that drivers

who intend to apply with CSS complete their applications by Thursday in order to receive an extension to keep working at the port until April 30.

Banks said she must submit letters by Friday to the California Air Resources Board and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District on behalf of truckers who will qualify for loans.

On Feb. 16, the Air Board will start updating the state truck registry to mark as "noncompliant" trucks that were not able to line up financing, and they will be prevented from entering the port.

Myron Williams, of Madera, hasn't worked at the port since last year. He never applied for a filter grant last year so he doesn't qualify for a new \$5,000 grant. He sat outside at OT-411 Monday, waiting for representatives from Cascade Sierra Solutions to show up so he could complete his loan application to buy a \$11,500 filter for his 1999 model truck. Williams said he switched to hauling freight, but there's just not enough work and his bills have been piling up.

"If I have to camp out here all day, I will," he said. " If they let me back in the piers, I can work and get back in the race. Right now, I'm so far behind. I keep my faith in the Lord ... we're testing every day, but this is a big one."

Representatives from Cascade Sierra Solutions and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will be at the OT-411 trucker information center this week from 2-6 p.m.

## **A look at Obama's 2011 budget for govt agencies**

Dina Cappiello

In the Sacramento Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010

Agency: Environmental Protection Agency

Spending: \$9.9 billion

Percentage change from 2010: 3.2 percent decrease

Mandatory Spending: None.

Highlights: Obama's budget would finance efforts by the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate the gases blamed for global warming - a first - as the administration awaits congressional action on legislation.

The budget seeks \$43 million in new funds for the EPA and states to control emissions of heat-trapping pollution from automobiles and refineries, power plants and factories. The administration also is looking for more money to roll out a new rule that would require polluters to annually report the amount of greenhouse gases they release.

Unlike last year, the budget does not bank on raising money to pay for a promised tax cut and clean energy technologies by auctioning off permits to companies that emit global warming gases. Congress has balked at that strategy. A House-passed bill gives the bulk of the permits away for free, as would a proposal being worked on in the Senate.

With a slight decrease in its request for hazardous-waste sites, the administration will likely continue to lag behind previous administrations in the pace of its cleanups.

The budget would continue to supply billions of dollars worth of grants to states and local governments to improve sewage treatment plants and drinking water systems, although the total is slightly less than last year. It adds another \$1.3 billion - a 14 percent increase - to help cash-strapped states and tribes implement air and water programs.

## **U.S., China, others join Copenhagen Accord on climate**

**Each nation determines its own target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.**

By Jim Tankersley, staff writer

L.A. Times, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010

Reporting from Washington - The United States, China and dozens of other countries accounting for nearly 80% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions have signed onto a voluntary agreement to curb climate change.

If the countries make good on their pledges, they will dramatically reduce the emissions scientists link to global warming, but not enough to hold temperatures to levels scientists say are needed to minimize risks of drought, flooding and other catastrophic effects.

Still, the number of nations signing on, along with the amount they pledged in reductions, buoyed many environmentalists after the December climate summit meeting in Copenhagen.

The 193 countries represented in Copenhagen could not reach agreement on a pact to reduce carbon emissions. They settled instead for a voluntary accord that asks each nation to pledge to reduce them.

"What we now know that we did get out of Copenhagen was clarity of what countries are going to be doing to fight climate change," said Keya Chatterjee, director of the World Wildlife Fund's climate change program. The situation is "much better than we had a couple months ago. But it's still not where we need to be."

In addition to the United States and China, the two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, the countries that met a Sunday deadline to formally join the Copenhagen Accord include India, Japan and the nations of the European Union, the United Nations announced Monday.

Each nation determined its own target for reducing emissions. Fast-developing countries such as China promised to limit emissions as a share of their growing economies, while wealthy nations such as the United States pledged reductions from historic levels.

The accord has no enforcement provision, though it does require participants to allow international scrutiny of their efforts.

Many of the pledges are contingent: The United States, for example, refuses to set a concrete target until Congress passes a climate bill, and Canada's pledge is linked to that of the U.S.

Even at their most stringent, the pledges do not meet the accord's goal of holding warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, climate scientists and environmental groups say.

The list of countries not signing onto the accord includes OPEC nations such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, which environmentalists do not expect to join. Other countries such as Turkey and Malaysia are expected to eventually sign on.

The countries still have major issues to hash out, including how to handle the billions of dollars to be funneled from wealthy nations to poorer ones to help them adapt to climate change and develop cleaner sources of energy.

The Obama administration asked Congress on Monday to allocate \$1.4 billion in the 2011 budget for international climate efforts. The administration has pledged to help raise as much as \$100 billion annually by 2020.

## **In a first step, nations pledge to fix global warming**

By Renee Schoof - McClatchy Newspapers  
Modesto Bee, Monday, Feb. 1, 2010

WASHINGTON -- China, India, the U.S. and the rest of the world's biggest polluters turned in their official pledges to reduce emissions, a move that gives global climate protection a start, the United Nations announced on Monday.

The pledges are written declarations of what countries promised to do during the global climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December. Although they're nonbinding and fall short of what's needed to be effective, the pledges are evidence that some developed and developing countries intend to put their promises into actions.

The U.N. reported that 55 countries, which together account for 78 percent of global emissions from energy use, turned in their action plans. The deadline was Sunday, but the U.N. said it was still open to late submissions.

The U.N. report came on the same day that the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review identified climate change as a major security threat.

Calling climate change "an accelerant of instability," the review marked the first time such a document linked environmental issues with national security.

The U.S. pledge, submitted Thursday, was to reduce emissions by 17 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. The Obama administration is looking to Congress to pass a law that sets out a plan to achieve the goal.

If Congress fails to do that by the end of the year, the administration will have to talk about alternative ways to honor its foreign policy commitment on climate change, said Alden Meyer, the director of strategy and policy with the Union of Concerned Scientists, an environmental advocacy group.

"How they get to 17 percent remains to be seen, but it's still possible to get there," he said.

Other options for the administration include emissions reductions requirements from the Environmental Protection Agency. The Department of Energy and other agencies also could cut emissions by requiring better energy efficiency for buildings, vehicles and appliances. State and local efforts also could help add up to lower national emissions.

The president's budget proposal on Monday included increased spending to develop renewable energy, including \$108 million to expand research in renewable energy and \$300 million for the Advanced Research Project Agency, which funds the development of future energy technologies.

The budget proposal also called for the elimination of \$2.7 billion in tax subsidies for oil, gas and coal. The Department of Energy also planned to end federal support for the "Ultra-Deepwater" exploration program for oil and natural gas. Energy Secretary Steven Chu said oil and gas companies could take over the exploration, at a taxpayer savings of \$50 million.

The Energy Department also wants an additional \$36 billion for loan guarantees for nuclear power projects. Chu called it part of a plan to help "restart the nuclear industry in the United States."

China also has paired large investments in clean energy with its pledge to reduce emissions growth.

"We believe these targets are solid and to meet them China will have to go far beyond business as usual," said Barbara Finamore, a China expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy group that has a 25-person office in China.

South Korea's ambassador for climate change, Chung Rae-kwon, said Monday during a teleconference with reporters that his country was implementing a plan through 2013 to invest 2 percent of the nation's gross domestic product each year on "green growth" and expects a payback of greater economic growth. South Korea also expects the investment will produce about 250,000 new jobs, he said.

South Korea would stick with its plan regardless of what the U.S. or other countries do "because we believe that low-carbon green growth is an opportunity for job creation and economic growth," he said.

Still, U.S. congressional action on climate legislation was essential for getting a global climate treaty in December at talks in Mexico, Chung said. "If we don't see positive development from the United States ... there will be a serious impact on negotiations leading up to Mexico."

Keya Chatterjee, director of the World Wildlife Fund's climate change program, said that because a climate bill is stuck in the Senate, "the U.S. remains tethered to the starting blocks while the rest of the world is beginning to complete lap one in the race for the clean energy economy."

Jennifer Morgan, the director of the World Resources Institute's climate and energy program, said she said the submission of written pledges in January showed that the countries were serious about shifting to cleaner energy.

"The pledges made by countries like Japan, China, Europe and India show a commitment to collective, transparent action on a scale never seen before," she said in a statement. "The United States should have no doubt that these countries plan to build their economies with clean energy."

The international promises, however, are "far below what is needed to avoid the worst impacts of climate change," she added. "The level of ambition must be ratcheted up if the world is to avoid dangerous levels of warming."

[Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010](#)

### **Our View: High-speed rail is gaining momentum**

#### **Funding elements are beginning to fall into place for state's project through the Valley.**

High-speed rail, once called a "Buck Rogers" idea by a California governor, is finally gaining momentum in the Golden State.

Most of the naysayers have gone silent, and the main question now is how to put together the billions of dollars it will take to build the system that will run through the heart of California.

Valley voters gave the state a big boost when they passed a \$9 billion bond measure, and now President Barack Obama is pushing high-speed rail. The federal government just handed out \$8 billion in grants, and California got the biggest share: \$2.25 billion.

High-speed rail has widespread support in the San Joaquin Valley, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was in Fresno on Friday promoting the project.

The governor said high-speed rail would make travel easier for the state's residents, create much-needed jobs and result in cleaner air because of fewer cars on the state's freeways.

We have appreciated Schwarzenegger's support of high-speed rail. His predecessor, Gray Davis, didn't think it was feasible and complained that the project was a "Buck Rogers thing."

Welcome to the 21st century. This project is real and it will be built. Groundbreaking for a segment of the California line could come as soon as next year. In addition, Merced County is making a pitch for the maintenance facility for the entire system at Castle Commerce Center in Atwater.

What is being called the "heavy maintenance facility" will employ 1,500 people, including rolling stock maintenance staff, train operators, central control supervisors, systemwide engineers and other staff. That's why Fresno, Bakersfield, Coalinga and Madera are also offering plans.

The entire project will be one big economic development project, as well as improving the state's transportation system, which is approaching gridlock. Europe and Japan have figured this out many years ago.

But even getting selected for a station on the rail line will be a big boost for Merced. In the Valley, the only stations initially will be in Bakersfield, Fresno and Merced. Modesto and Sacramento will have to wait for the rail to extend to them.

In addition to the state bond money, the federal high-speed rail grant will be seed money for the project's first phase from Anaheim to San Francisco, which will come up through the Valley.

That phase is estimated to cost about \$43 billion. Local funds and private investments are expected to augment the funding already committed. There's also the likelihood of more federal money in the future for the project.

High-speed rail is on its way to being a part of the nation's transportation alternatives. We must do all we can to get it built as soon as possible.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses the governor orders investigation on birth defects in Kettleman City, CA. The investigation will be ordered after 5 babies in a 1,500 populated town were born with cleft lips. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Gobernador ordena investigación sobre defectos congénitos en Kettleman City, CA**

Zaidee Stavely

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingue, Monday, Feb. 1, 2010

El gobernador de California, Arnold Shwarzenegger ordenó que las autoridades de salud pública del estado investiguen más a fondo los defectos de nacimiento en Kettleman City, California, donde cinco bebés de ese pequeño poblado, de mil 500 habitantes, nacieron con labio leporino y otros defectos congénitos en poco más de un año.

“Estoy contenta porque así voy a saber qué pasó con mi niña”, dijo a Noticiero Latino Magdalena Romero, madre de América, la primer bebé de Kettleman City que nació con el labio leporino. “Jamás nos esperábamos que llegara esto hasta el oído del gobernador”, afirmó.

Los residentes han estado pidiendo una investigación desde hace un año, para ver si los defectos tienen algo que ver con el vertedero tóxico más grande de todo el oeste de Estados Unidos, que se encuentra a pocas millas de dicha comunidad.

“Estamos orgullosos de que el Estado por fin va a investigar lo que está sucediendo en Kettleman”, sostuvo Helen Herrera, vocera de la compañía, Chemical Waste Management. “También creemos en nuestra operación en Kettleman Hills”.

El Departamento de Salud Pública de California planea ir a visitar la comunidad y presentar los primeros resultados de su investigación el próximo 9 de febrero. El gobernador dice que el estudio a fondo incluirá entrevistas con los padres y las madres de los bebés, así como análisis del aire y del agua en la comunidad.