

## **Central Valley gets respite from dust, sees cooler weather**

### **Powerful wind gusts are rare in Valley, forecaster reports**

By Brian Maxey

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, June 6 2012

The gentle breeze that wafted across the sunny Tulare County sky Tuesday was ideal weather for residents like Bob Bustamante of Tulare, who walks for about an hour at Del Lago Park in Tulare each day.

The cooler-than-average temperature was a respite from the upper-80-degree weather of the previous days, but was also a stark deviation from the strong winds that kicked up a giant wall of dust Monday.

The dust storm swept across the Central Valley at about 4:20 p.m. and lasted until about 7:30 p.m., snarling traffic, downing electrical poles and trees and tinting the sky with a dull-brown hue along the way.

Winds up to 40 mph were recorded as the storm system — which was produced by a cold front from the north — arrived from the west side of the Valley, trailing a plume of dust that reached up to 2,000 feet.

Scott Borgioli, meteorologist with Visalia-based WeatherAg.com, said a dust storm the magnitude of Monday's had not been seen in the Valley in nearly two years.

Powerful gusts of wind are rare in the low-lying Central Valley, Borgioli said. However, because of the number of agricultural fields and open dirt, winds do not need to be particularly strong to produce a dust storm in the lower atmosphere, he said.

Dust-filled skies and precipitation that totaled 0.6 of an inch kept the California Highway Patrol and fire departments busy.

Portions of Highway 99 were closed because of low visibility, which caused a series of collisions, the CHP reported.

The CHP issued a warning to drivers to slow down, increase distance between vehicles and turn on their headlights.

Traffic at Highway 99 and Paige Avenue in Tulare was slowed by thick dust caused by gusting winds as was traffic on Highway 198.

The Visalia Fire Department received about 20 calls for service from 4:30 to 8 p.m., said Battalion Chief Ray Ramirez, the department's battalion chief.

Once the dust settled, tree branches and power lines blocked some roadways.

In the 1200 block of West Laurel Avenue, a branch knocked power lines into a backyard fence and in the area of Ventura and Sonora avenues between O and R streets, a downed power line sparked a small fire, Tulare fire officials said.

About 3,000 customers lost power just after 6 p.m. in Tulare, according to Southern California Edison officials. Power was restored to about half of them in less than an hour.

Winds died down to about 25 mph Monday.

A warming trend is expected through next week. By the weekend, high temperatures are expected to return to the mid-80s, with a possibility of reaching 90 by Monday, Borgioli said.

## **Second Valley health advisory**

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, June 6 2012

FRESNO (AP) — High winds across the San Joaquin Valley prompted air pollution officials to again warn that breathing the heavy dust being carried with it could cause health problems.

The Air Pollution Control District on Tuesday afternoon issued its second dust health advisory in two days, to be in effect through Tuesday night.

Tulare, Fresno, Kings, Madera and parts of Kern counties were affected.

Blowing dust can result in unhealthy levels of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller. Breathing in particles can aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and acute bronchitis. Everyone should reduce exposure, strenuous activities and heavy exertion.

## **Air district warns of wind dangers**

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, June 6, 2012

The San Joaquin Valley will experience blowing dust in the air until about midnight Tuesday, prompting the local air district to issue a cautionary statement to the public.

Gusts of wind through the rest of Tuesday evening will cause high concentrations of dust in the air of Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern counties.

The dust isn't expected to be as heavy as it was Monday, according to Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"We are expecting pockets of blowing dust as opposed to widespread blowing dust," she said.

Bakersfield can expect the air to clear Wednesday morning, with things returning to normal by Friday, according to Turner.

Extended exposure to the blowing dust can trigger asthma attacks and cause other respiratory problems. Turner recommended people stay inside and limit exposure to the dust as much as possible.

## **High winds, dust prompt SJ Valley health advisory**

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and other papers, Wednesday, June 6, 2012

High winds across the San Joaquin Valley have prompted air pollution officials to warn that breathing the heavy dust being carried with it could cause health problems.

The valley Air Pollution Control District on Tuesday afternoon issued its second dust health advisory in two days.

Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Madera and parts of Kern counties are affected.

Blowing dust can result in unhealthy levels of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller. Breathing in particles can aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and acute bronchitis.

The district says that everyone should reduce exposure, strenuous activities and heavy exertion.

The health warning will be in effect through Tuesday evening.

## **Gusty winds prompt health advisory**

Taft Midway Driller, Wednesday, June 6, 2012

Taft, Calif. — Gusty winds over the San Joaquin Valley have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a second health cautionary statement in effect through this evening. This statement follows one which expired yesterday at midnight.

Winds in Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern counties may produce areas of localized blowing dust. Blowing dust can result in unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. For people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmia, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents in these areas are advised to use caution through this evening. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

For more information about the Valley Air District, call a regional office: in Fresno, 559-230-6000; in Bakersfield, 661-392-5500; and in Modesto, 209-557-6400.

## **Dust storm howls through Hanford**

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, June 5, 2012

HANFORD — A nasty dust storm blew through Hanford Monday, putting fire officials on alert and trapping some Home Garden residents in a mobile home. A falling tree pulled a power line down onto a mobile home on Third Place, drooping it across the structure and forcing the residents to stay inside, said Mike Virden, assistant Kings County fire chief. Residents were instructed not to touch anything in the trailer as a precaution.

Other trees and power lines were reported down all over of Kings County, and there were accounts of trees splitting in Hanford and Lemoore. Fire department officials expected more calls for assistance as the storm continued.

Twenty-seven customers were affected by a power outage in Lemoore, in the area south from Avenue 312 to Houston Avenue, between 19th and 15th avenues, PG&E said. Other areas had it worse; PG&E reported 90 outages affecting 1,594 customers in Fresno.

The dust-choked air prompted a health warning from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The district advised people with asthma and other respiratory infections or disorders to use caution through the evening by avoiding prolonged outdoor exposure.

The storm reduced visibility for drivers and caused other problems. Big Orange Shaved Ice, an outdoor shaved ice stand, shut down.

Winds were reported to be blowing 28 to 30 miles per hour in the Hanford-Lemoore area and the unusual storm brought with it a 20 percent chance of showers by 11 p.m. today.

## **Fresno green building program runs out of steam**

By Ben Keller

The Business Journal Monday, June 4, 2012

In Fresno, there are more reasons to build green than just the good feeling of being more energy efficient and using recycled materials.

A local program put in place five years ago also offers developers a reduction on planning fees, expedited permit processing and a break on project components that don't quite meet development standards.

But lately, the Fresno Green Building Incentive Program has lost the steam that once had the city's Development and Resource Management Department shepherding building projects that conserve energy and water while paying the same respect [to air quality](#), pedestrian access and public art.

Since its November 2007 rollout, the program's "Green Team" has reviewed a total of 21 different building projects. It has certified eight of those projects, awarding some a 25-percent reduction in many planning fees, and in some cases, a 20-percent minor deviation from development standards such as building height or lot dimensions.

According to the Green Team's Chair Karana Hattersley-Drayton, however, no new applications have been submitted or evaluated in close to a year while references to the program aren't even included in the city's recently released 2025 General Plan and other documents pertaining to conservation.

"The whole building industry has been slower and a lot of the (original program creators) aren't even with the city anymore," she said.

Aside from a lag in construction, Hattersley-Drayton herself admitted that there have been some questions as to whether the Fresno Green program is even needed anymore.

For one thing, she said, California has stepped up its mandatory standards on green building, leaving many local initiatives either obsolete or struggling to keep up.

Some builders, such as Granville Homes, have even made sustainable construction a personal mission, she said, adding cool roofs, tankless water heaters, low-E vinyl windows and other efficient features on all its new homes as part of its Eco-Smart program.

As well, the minor deviations allowed by the program might not be consistent with changes currently being made to the city's development codes, such as the ones affecting downtown, she said.

In spite of the setbacks, Hattersley-Drayton and the Green Team — consisting of two city planners and a few representing the architecture and housing trades — stand ready to assemble over new applications to see what qualifies for certification.

"It's kind of a love and not really my job," she said. "It's all done by staff cutting out time from our schedules."

Much like the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and Build It Green's GreenPoint rating system, the program relies on a point-based checklist of optional criteria in order to assess a project's green status.

In fact, projects that satisfy the requirements of LEED or GreenPoint systems are automatically given the Fresno Green label.

But unlike the nation-wide programs before it, Hattersley-Drayton said Fresno Green incorporates the additional amenities of public art and pedestrian access and does away with the cost and rigmarole of other certifications.

"The point was to make it accessible," she said. "Instead of having pages and pages of applications and guidelines, it's two pages."

One of the first projects to be branded Fresno Green was the Unitarian Universalist Church near Alluvial and Chestnut avenues, built in 2007.

The building, also LEED-certified, is complete with a light scoop that takes advantage of natural light, recycled flooring made from sawdust and linseed oil and urinals made of recycled soda bottles along with outside plants that don't need much water.

The facility is also powered, in part, by a 35-kilowatt photovoltaic solar energy system that reduces the church's electricity costs by about \$15,500 every year.

Through its certification by the Fresno Green program, the church also received an \$8,000 rebate in planning fees.

On the property just west of the church sits another Fresno Green project that made its efficient design known to Fresno residents when it first opened in 2008.

Dubbed the Fresno cohousing project, La Quarencia boasts 28 condominium units equipped with solar panels, Energy Star appliances, low-water-use fixtures, ample natural light and active/passive cooling/heating techniques that reduce monthly utility bills.

"I live in a three-bedroom unit and the electric bill is less than \$300 a year," said George Burman, a retired electrical engineer who also helped plan the development. "Part of that comes from solar and a big part comes from the fact that design of the build is for energy efficiency."

The community-oriented condos were also built within walking distance of schools, parks, shopping, restaurants and bicycle paths to reduce dependence on automobiles and increase opportunities for exercise.

Other local projects receiving the Fresno Green certification include the Dickey Youth Center in downtown Fresno, the Park Grove Commons apartment complex on Clinton Avenue, the Juvenile Justice Campus in south of Fresno and the home of Mary Riojas, featured in 2008 on the hit TV show Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. The home, built by DeYoung Properties, received a deviation for being built too close to the street thanks to the Fresno Green program.

