

## **Investigators looking into Hanford's smoky morning mystery**

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Late Wed., Sept. 26, 2012

HANFORD — The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is investigating the foul-smelling smoke that settled over Hanford early this morning.

Local officials are at a loss to explain the acrid-smelling haze that enveloped the city in the last few hours with no clear source.

The Hanford and Kings County fire departments confirmed that they are not fighting any local fires.

Hanford Public Works Director Lou Camara said no paving work — which produces a strong odor by using hot tar — is under way within the city limits.

Even so, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is noticing rising levels of particulate matter inside Kings County. They have sent compliance investigators to the area to find out why, spokeswoman Ruth Crisp said.

## **Where did all that smoke come from?**

*There are several possible explanations*

Taft Midway Driller Wed., Sept. 26, 2012

Taft and the entire Westside were blanketed under a thick pall of smoke Tuesday afternoon and evening, prompting numerous complaints to the Taft Midway Driller and to the newspaper's Facebook page.

The Kern County Fire Station in Taft also received a lot of calls from people concerned that there was major fire and about health concerns. The smoke started drifting over the area in early afternoon and gradually thickened.

By 5 p.m., smoke covered the skies and obscured the horizon. It finally cleared up overnight.

There were several possible reasons given for all the smoke:

- A Kern County Fire Department spokesman said firefighters responded to a fire in a large pile of almond hulls in the Shafter area.
- The same spokesman said there were burn jobs in northwestern Kern County in the Lost Hills area. That was supported by several posts to the Taft Midway Driller Facebook page.
- The Driller has also received an unconfirmed report of a prescribed burn in the Kern National Wildlife Refuge in northern Kern County.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District only received a couple of calls, officials said. A staff member in Bakersfield said she received one complaint about the smoke in Taft.

Jamie Holt, a spokeswoman for the District in Fresno, did confirm that a couple of reports were received.

"We received a few calls and complaints about burning and dust from harvesting," Holt said Wednesday afternoon. "We did investigate and we didn't find any violations."

## **Health care union sponsoring Valley asthma walk**

**Tour stop planned at Hidden Valley Park Saturday**

By Joseph Luiz

Hanford Sentinel, Late Wed., Sept. 26, 2012

HANFORD — Health care workers and community members from throughout the Valley are walking to increase awareness about the region's bad air quality.

A walking tour titled "Walking the Asthma Trail for a Healthy Central Valley" is starting in Fresno today and ending on Oct. 4 in Sacramento, with a stop planned for Hanford at Hidden Valley Park on Saturday. The tour will also stop in Visalia, Chowchilla, Modesto, Selma and other cities with high asthma rates.

The tour is sponsored by Service Employees International Union–United Healthcare Workers West and is part of the union’s “Let’s Get Healthy California” platform to improve the quality and cost of health care for chronic diseases. This is the first year the union is holding an asthma walk.

“We want to learn from local communities what the major issues are there and how they are being affected,” said SEIU Coordinator Val Tagawa.

The union got the idea for the walk after many of the health care workers the union represents complained about the state government not doing enough to improve the Valley’s air quality, Tagawa said. According to the union’s research, nearly one in six children in the Valley is affected by asthma.

During the tour stops, volunteers will provide information, free asthma screenings and other health services. The stop will also feature a video booth where citizens can tell their stories about the impact the bad air quality has had on their lives and those of their loved ones. The testimonials will be delivered to state officials in Sacramento.

The tour’s leaders also hope to gain support in Sacramento for Gov. Jerry Brown’s Let’s Get Healthy California Task Force, which is trying to develop ways to reduce chronic disease over the next ten years. The task force is planning to make recommendations to the governor in December.

Tagawa said so far there has been strong interest in the tours. She said the union was expecting about 30 people to participate in the walk, but so far more than 100 have expressed interest in joining.

“There’s been more momentum than we expected,” Tagawa said. “We’re really excited to see how it’s all going to come out.”