



# Valley Air News

A publication of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

November 1999

## Westley Tire Fire Update

If it is true that people remember the bad and forget the good, air quality in 1999 may long be recollected for one predominate reason: the Westley tire fire. Up to the last day of summer, Valley residents were enjoying the second best air quality in two decades. The Spare the Air season was about to conclude with only 11 episodes and the District had not declared any health advisories due to very high ground-level ozone readings.

All of that changed in the early morning hours of September 22, when lightning ignited a fire that eventually engulfed five million tires near the town of Westley.

The fire, which continued to smolder at press time, is approximately 20 miles west of Modesto and adjacent to Interstate 5. The 40-acre site belonging to Edward Filbin was opened in the 1950's and, when the blaze broke out, contained approximately seven million discarded tires. The tires were to be

recycled in a variety of methods, or incinerated in a nearby co-generation plant owned by UAE Energy.

The Stanislaus County Fire Department and the California Office of Emergency Services arrived immediately to fight the fire and assess public safety. The California Air Resources Board, Environmental Protection Agency, and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District also dispatched personnel quickly to assist in determining the air quality impacts and health risks posed by the burning tires. Within 24 hours, the California Air Resources Board installed monitoring equipment in seven locations around the area to measure for ambient toxic volatile organic compounds, black carbon, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

Although the thick, black smoke was visually alarming, the intense heat pushed the plume 3,000 feet aloft, well

above the inversion layer. This allowed the smoke to disperse over a wider area, creating a dilution effect. Depending on wind conditions, Newman, Patterson, and Westley residents experienced patchy smoke, but initial air quality readings in the communities around the fire confirmed that soot, ash, and other airborne particle levels were only moderately higher than normal. Areas as far away as Fremont and San Jose, however, reported ash fallout.

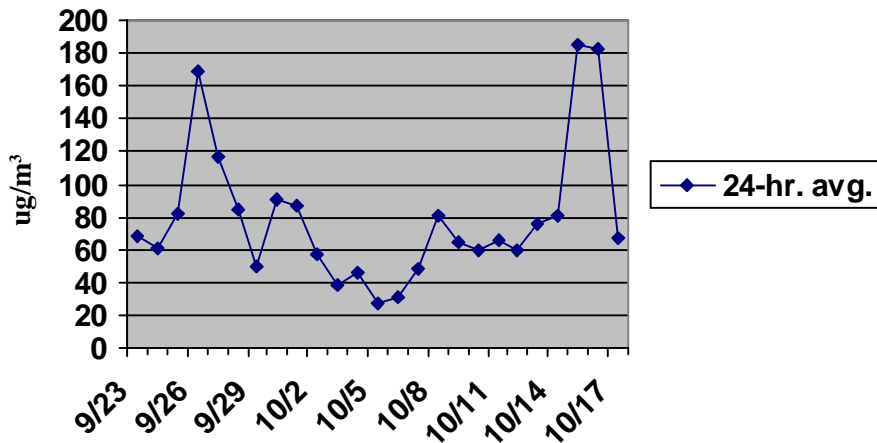
As the following graph of representative data illustrates, the worst air pollution levels were recorded four to six days after the onset of the fire. During this period, there were high one-hour peak readings and a number of exceedances of the extremely protective state standard set at 50 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) over 24 hours. While these levels were higher than normal for early fall,

*See TIRE FIRE UPDATE, page 2*

This chart represents the Westley/Livingston 24-hour average of particulate matter of ten microns or less per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

Federal Standard = 150  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3/24$  hrs.

State Standard = 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3/24$  hrs.



## INSIDE

### THIS EDITION

Clean Air Trivia	2
Governing Board Review	2
In the Spotlight	3
What's Ahead	4

## GOVERNING BOARD REVIEW

Following is a summary of actions taken at the October 14 Governing Board meeting:

- Recommendations of Governing Board review ad hoc subcommittee to evaluate existing procedures for the Remove Program.
- Verbal report regarding the California Air Resources Board (ARB) Board Meeting.

The Board also approved a number of items on the consent calendar, including:

- Admendment to Rule 4661 (Organic Solvents) to correct rule deficiencies cited by EPA in order to make the rule fully approvable for the State Implementation Plan (SIP).
- Contract amendment No. 2 with R&W Software for programming support for the Permit Administration System.
- Amendments to REMOVE program grant award contract, as follows:
  - Approved and authorized execution of Amendment No. 1 to the REMOVE Program Contract #97-027 with California State University, Stanislaus to extend the term of the contract to March 1, 2000.



**November  
No Governing Board Meeting  
Scheduled**

*Clean Air*

Trivia

**Did you know?**

**That the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin is 250 miles long and is shaped like a narrow bowl?**

## The District Participates in Ozone Study

Beginning next summer, the District will participate in the Central California Ozone Study (CCOS) to gain a better understanding of the amount, types, and placement of ozone precursors in the Valley.

The study is a regional, cooperative venture between the California Air Resources Board, Bay Area, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Valley Air Districts, and other, smaller air quality agencies. It is being done in order to attain the current federal and state one-hour ozone standards and the new, more stringent eight-hour standard.

Many types of meteorological and pollutant assessments will be conducted during CCOS, both at ground-level and high aloft. The data will assist in understanding the formation of ground-level ozone within the region. The study will pay special

attention, however, to determining the amount ozone of transported into Central California from other areas. To measure the transport of these pollutants, aircraft, meteorological balloons, and radar profilers will be deployed to supplement the equipment used in the existing measurement networks of the Districts and the CARB. Once the data is collected, it will be archived and readied for use in the analyses and modeling of ozone within Central California. These models will be crucial in determining the amounts and types of emissions reductions needed to achieve the ozone health standards.

To reduce costs, the CCOS will use some of the equipment from the California Regional Particulate Air Quality Study that will be conducted from December 1, 1999 through January 31, 2001.

### Training for CAPP Scheduled for 2000

Training sessions for certified air permitting professional candidates will be conducted January 24-27, 2000 at the Valley Air District's Central Region Office, 1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno.

All CAPP candidates must submit a complete CAPP application form to the District by December 31, 1999. Class assignments will be based upon the date the completed application is received.

An application form can be obtained by calling (559) 230-6000, or by faxing your request to (559) 230-6061. Any comments or questions may be addressed to George Heinen at San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, 1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, CA, 93726-0244 or by phone at (559) 230-5909.

### TIRE FIRE UPDATE Continued from page 1

they were not unduly alarming and did not frequently exceed the federal standard of 150 ug/m<sup>3</sup> over 24 hours.

It is important to remember that a number of other factors not associated with the fire may have contributed to higher levels of particulate matter. These included agricultural and construction activities, as well as natural causes. A fact illustrated during the second week of October, when particulate matter levels increased once again due in part to a number of grass and wild fires around the state.

To obtain more detailed information on air pollution levels around the tire fire, the public may log onto [www.co.stanislaus.ca.us/tirefire](http://www.co.stanislaus.ca.us/tirefire). Additionally, Valley residents may obtain air quality readings and regional forecast for the entire District by calling 1-800-766-4463. This information is updated daily after 4 p.m.

## District Approves Contract for Emissions Inventory Control Profile Development

To assess and update the emission reduction effects of the District's adopted rules (referred to as control profiles), and to provide information as to what additional reductions are available, the District Governing Board recently approved a contract with Arons Air Quality Services.

The District's *Ozone Attainment Demonstration Plan* commits the District to reduce volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxide emissions from stationary and area sources. To achieve these reductions, the Governing Board adopted 37 prohibitory rules with implementation dates occurring after 1991. The consultant will assess existing control profiles and develop new ones for the rules in January 2000. The control profiles will examine the control efficiency and the rule penetration for the various District prohibitory rules. The control efficiency component of a profile examines the percentage of remaining or uncontrolled emissions after an abatement technique has been employed. Rule penetration assesses the degree that a rule controls emissions from the target sources.

Improving the emissions inventory is an on-going task. In 1998, the District and the Air Resources Board formed emissions inventory work groups to address point source, area source, forecasting and transportation/mobile issues. The project, to be conducted by Arons Air Quality Services, will contribute to the work of the forecasting work group by providing updated control profiles in the new format for the Air Resources Board's recently redesigned California Emission Forecasting System. Several other air districts will be undertaking a similar effort.

## Delegation Visits Golden State Avenue Monitoring Station

A tour of the Golden State Avenue air monitoring station in Bakersfield was conducted on October 21 for representatives of the State Environmental Protection Agency of China (SEPEC). This was the third visit arranged by Dasibi Environmental Corporation.

"Dasibi representatives are currently working with representatives of the California Air Resources Board on Phase I of an eleven-city environmental monitoring project. Hence, the importance of the delegation viewing the equipment in operation and analyzing the quality and efficiency of the data," stated Eric Lai, project engineer for Dasibi. The delegation represented eleven

cities currently using air monitoring systems similar to the state-of-the-art monitoring equipment and technology in use at the Golden State Avenue monitoring station.

The delegation, led by Xinyuan Lu, director of General Environment Supervision and Bo Wo, director of Air Monitoring for SEPEC, also met with officials at the California Air Resources Board to discuss air quality issues and they plan to visit the USEPA in Washington D.C.

Dasibi Environmental Corporation plans to begin Phase II of the environmental monitoring project to include twenty-five cities during the first half of 2000.



### Valley Chrome Plating

#### 1999 Air District Award of Distinction for Emissions Control Program for a Permitted Source

Founded in 1960, Valley Chrome Plating of Clovis specializes in decorative chrome and nickel plating of metal parts. In a recent effort to voluntarily reduce emissions, the company began adding a surface tension reducing agent to its nickel-plating tanks. The reducing agent drops the surface tension in the tank, creating a natural barrier, which minimizes the amount of material that rises above the edge of the tank. Since the material stays in the tank, there are no air emissions created.

Valley Chrome Plating was the first nickel-plating facility in the Valley to add a surface tension reducer to its tanks. By implementing this emissions control technology, the company increased production by 7.5 times, yet its nickel emissions decreased by 68 percent or 152 pounds per year.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District salutes Valley Chrome Plating for its contributions to improved air quality.