

Oppressive heat propels mercury ever closer to 110

By Marc Benjamin, The Fresno Bee, *August 12, 2002*

Polluted air and temperatures nearly 10 degrees higher than normal this week will serve as a reminder that the Valley remains in the throes of summer.

After three weeks of milder-than-normal and average heat, the Valley's temperatures will increase to 110 degrees, according to National Weather Service forecasts.

As the Valley prepares for this week's onslaught of oppressive heat, today has been labeled a Spare the Air Day by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, serving as a warning to pollution-

sensitive residents to avoid strenuous activity.

If there is a tiny slice of solace in this week's torrid temperatures, it's that today's forecast high in Fresno of 106, and the 107 predicted for Tuesday, will not be record highs, said Michael Bingham, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Hanford. Today's record is 110; Tuesday and Wednesday's record is 112; and Thursday's is 109.

Coalinga and Three Rivers are expected to be the Valley warm spots today, with temperatures of 108, then 109 on Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service.

Foothill and mountain locations will share the warmth today and Tuesday, with Yosemite hitting 98 today and 100 Tuesday, Mariposa climbing to 101 today and 106 Tuesday, and Shaver Lake topping out at 94 today and 95 Tuesday.

By Wednesday or Thursday, temperatures will begin to drop one or two degrees, Bingham said.

"It's very typical in Fresno for August," Bingham said of the high-pressure system bringing this week's heat.

The heat will bring with it a special brew of bad air, but a formal health advisory was not issued late Sunday.

To reduce pollution levels, residents are being urged to carpool and avoid non-essential vehicle trips, postpone yard work with gasoline-powered equipment, and avoid use of motor boats, personal watercraft and off-road vehicles.

In addition, residents are asked to avoid the use of household sprays, solvents, oil-based paints and charcoal lighter fluids.

Fresno's high Sunday was 103 degrees. Coalinga was the Valley's hottest spot at 107.

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Wal-Mart to build all-in-one center

The **Bakersfield Californian**, August 09, 2002

Wal-Mart plans to build a 220,900-square-foot Supercenter in the area of Panama Lane and Wible Road, a company official said Friday.

The supercenter, which Wal-Mart wants to open in 2004, would be among the company's first in California. The concept pairs a grocery store -- complete with meat department and bakery -- and a traditional Wal-Mart under one roof.

Plans also call for the closure of the Wal-Mart store on White Lane, said company spokesman Peter Kanelos.

"There's no expansion capabilities on that store," Kanelos said. "We were looking to relocate and we felt it would be a good opportunity to put in a supercenter."

The move comes amid an influx of large-scale retail centers in Bakersfield over the past few years. Most recently, discount shopping club Costco opened a new store on Rosedale Highway this week.

Various retail chains' expansions and closures in the city, however, have led to a glut of empty big-box retail space -- including the old Costco store on Sillect Avenue.

Wal-Mart last opened a store in Bakersfield in 1998 -- the 127,000-square-foot store in the Northwest Promenade on Rosedale Highway.

The company recently announced an aggressive expansion into California, including the addition of 40 supercenters over the next four to six years.

"Bakersfield has been a very strong supporter of Wal-Mart," Kanelos said. "The three stores in Bakersfield perform very well."

Wal-Mart also operates a store at 2601 Fashion Place in east Bakersfield.

Kanelos and Todd Williams, manager of the White Lane location, said the company aims to put the new Wal-Mart on Panama Lane west of Highway 99. Though the company plans to open the new store in 2004, there is no firm timetable at this point, Kanelos said.

Jim Eggart, a principal planner with the city of Bakersfield, said he had heard of no project that would put a Wal-Mart store at Panama Lane and Wible Road.

He had, however, heard rumors that a Wal-Mart superstore would move into a commercial project just entering the city review process east of Highway 99 on Panama Lane.

"We believe Wal-Mart is looking to build up to three superstores here," he said.

The project east of Highway 99, which city maps show would contain a Lowe's home improvement center, is being built by Bakersfield developer Lee Jamieson, the man who put together the Northwest Promenade.

Mixed emotions

Barbara Ellis, who has worked at the White Lane Wal-Mart for almost 12 years greeting customers, had mixed emotions about news of the store's move.

"We get busier every year," she said. "We are overpopulated. But, I hate to see this store close."

Williams said his store is one of the oldest in California, and Bakersfield has outgrown it. The store opened in 1991.

"People have been asking for a supercenter for a long time," Williams said.

Williams believes this is a positive step for the community, since it will offer jobs and competitive pricing.

"It will be like a small town. A one-stop shop," he said.

However, a new "small town" is exactly what Hal Niedenslager, who lives on Akers Road in the vicinity of the proposed supercenter, wants to avoid.

"Man, the traffic is bad enough out here," he said. "I like Wal-Mart, but it's like its own city. I'm not looking forward to the big boys coming out here."

Niedenslager's neighbor, Sara Holmes, agreed.

"It will be nice to be within walking distance," she said, "but that's not a good enough reason to want them out here. They'll bring tons of vehicles and **smog**."

Mario Gomez, manager of La Mina restaurant on White Lane in the Wal-Mart shopping center, doesn't want to see the store go.

"I'm a little sad about it," he said. "We get a lot of Wal-Mart shoppers over here. Maybe we'll think about opening a store over where they go."

-- **Staff writers Melissa Dabrushman and James Burger contributed to this report**

Report: State fails on clean energy

By ERIN WALDNER, Bakersfield Californian staff writer, August 08, 2002

California has failed to keep pace with much of the country in the area of clean, renewable energy, according to a report released Thursday.

The San Francisco-based Energy Foundation, which released the report in partnership with the Hewlett Foundation, claims the state's business climate in this arena has deteriorated to the point

where many clean-power companies are all but throwing in the towel. The Energy Foundation is a partnership of foundations interested in sustainable energy.

"California has become one of the most difficult power markets to develop wind projects from a financial point of view because of a lack of regulatory stability. Who is in charge?" Robert Gates, senior vice president of GE Wind Energy in Tehachapi, said in the report. "Doing business in California is very, very difficult. We still don't have any standard power purchasing contracts on the table."

Atlanta-based GE Power Systems announced in February it was buying Enron Wind from the bankrupt Enron Corp. The deal cost GE \$325 million.

The report states that Gates' former employer, Enron Wind, has 113 megawatts of new wind energy projects on hold due to uncertainty in the state's power market.

The report, "Gone With the Wind: How California Is Losing Its Clean Power Edge ... to Texas," documents what it sees as the demise of wind, solar, geothermal and biomass industries in California since the 1980s.

"Thirty years ago, California was the role model for renewable energy policy," the report's author, Peter Asmus, said in a statement. "But in 2001, when California needed alternative power more than any other time in history to avoid rolling blackouts and price manipulation, very little new renewable energy was available."

According to the report, other states have surpassed California, once a world leader in clean, renewable energy, in encouraging renewable energy.

President George W. Bush, then governor of Texas, signed a state deregulation law that called for bringing 400 megawatts of renewable energy online by the end of 2001. As a result, more than half of the nation's wind power capacity comes from this oil-rich state.

"We have been concerned about renewables," Claudia Chandler, assistant executive director of the California Energy Commission, said Thursday. She had not yet read the report.

Chandler said this is a challenging time in California for renewable energy companies because the state's deregulation market is still broken. But, she said, three things are going on that could bolster renewable energy.

A state bill, SB 530, would encourage electric generation from renewables. Second, proceedings are under way to determine how the Public Utilities Commission can establish long-term contracts with renewable companies. Third, Chandler said the deregulation market needs to be fixed so it lends itself to renewables able to get power contracts.

Spare the Air alert activated

By Nancy Price, Record Staff Writer, August 10, 2002

Those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer are a whole lot hazier and will stay that way for at least a few more days.

As a result, air-pollution control districts in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys have issued Spare the Air Day alerts for today.

San Joaquin County residents can do their part by not using gasoline-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers and by limiting the number of trips in their gas-powered vehicles.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District forecast an air quality index of 132 for today, an unhealthy level. Sensitive children and adults, and those suffering from respiratory diseases such as asthma are urged to remain indoors.

Today's Spare the Air Day will be the 13th this year, said Josette Merced Bello, a spokeswoman for the San Joaquin air district.

"This is not the worst it's been, but we're getting up there," she said. "With this kind of smoggy weather, we want to get the public involved in restricting activities."

Most people won't be commuting to work this weekend, but they should try to restrict their driving and use of gas-powered gardening tools, Merced Bello said.

"If possible, they should let the grass grow a little longer and not use gas-powered mowers for the weekend."

The Sacramento Valley air district forecast an AQI of 174 for today, which means small children and the elderly should avoid being outdoors, and everyone else should avoid prolonged outdoor exposure.

A strong high-pressure system clamping down on Northern California combined with calm winds and high temperatures are "all the perfect ingredients for ozone pollution," said Jamie Arno, a spokeswoman for the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.

The air district issued a special health advisory for several hours Friday afternoon for an area from downtown Sacramento east to Auburn and Placerville.

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Born to run

By LORENZO MIRANDA, 19, Bakersfield College

Bakersfield Californian, August 07, 2002

Running is the foundation of fitness. No matter what sport you call your own, or even if you just want to shed a few pounds, running is critical to reaching your physical goals.

Want to improve the number of times you can go up and down the court? Run. Want to have a second wind at the end of the game? Run. You get the picture.

But getting into better shape doesn't come easily. One time or another, while surfing through the television channels, you have surely seen marathon runners contort their way across the finish line like they're playing a round of vertical Twister.

While running is not always this painful, the environment of Bakersfield does create its challenges. Runners should take certain precautions to ensure a safe workout and achieve the best possible results from their bodies.

Be sure to get enough liquids

With temperatures in the triple digits, it is important to keep liquids and nutrients inside your body.

"I just found out that I'm supposed to be drinking my body weight in ounces," said Jamie Muskrat, an employee at Runner's Outlet.

It's a no-brainer that one needs to be drinking huge amounts of water, but most people don't know when they should drink sports drinks instead.

"If you're not running very far, then water is better, but if you are going to be running over half an hour, you should be drinking a sports drink because it has all the sodium and electrolytes to replenish what you lose when you sweat," said Kacie Whitler, another employee of Runner's Outlet.

Protect yourself from heat and bad air

This can be a contradiction in terms. On one hand, you don't want to pack yourself down with too many articles of clothing, yet you don't want to subject your skin to those ultraviolet rays. The best solution is to find a happy medium.

"You want to wear light-color clothing," said Jill Seay Geer, assistant coach of cross country at South High School. "You don't want to wear the black T-shirt. Use SPF 15 waterproof (sun block) at least."

Another item that can be just as hazardous for runners as the heat in Bakersfield is the air quality. With air quality often reaching unhealthy levels, many runners can feel shortness of breath from the abundance of air pollution in the valley.

There is no way to avoid bad air, but there are ways to minimize its effects. Running early in the morning or late in the evening can cut back on fumes due to low traffic at these times. In addition, fewer cars on the road mean fewer hazards to contend with while running.

Carefully warm up and stretch your body

"A lot of people think that they need to get out there and start stretching right away," Seay Geer said. "And the problem with that is if those muscles are not slightly warmed up, they are not pliable. You end up hurting yourself."

It's a good idea to run half a mile to a mile at a slow pace before jumping directly into your full workout. Even starting your workout slowly can help avoid injury.

Don't run on an empty stomach

Food provides energy for your body, so when engaging in physically stressful activities, ensure your body has enough fuel.

Eating before your workout is up to your daily routine. If you don't eat in the morning regularly, there is no need to eat. Foods to avoid before a workout include fruits, vegetables and dairy products because they take time to digest.

Carbohydrates, such as breads and pasta, are great before a run, and protein foods such as meat help the rebuilding process in the muscles afterward.

Select the right footwear

Not all feet are created equal, and that can be said for running shoes as well. It is important to find a shoe that is made specifically for your type of foot. Otherwise, you could wind up with blisters, shin splints, strains, or hip and back pain.

Overall, running is a trial-and-error ordeal. Try a few things out, and decide how comfortable it is for yourself. Running may be painful at times, but when done under the right conditions and with the right clothing and footwear, it can be an enjoyable experience.

"You can get really burned out or you can enjoy it," Muskrat said. "Don't make yourself hate running."

[Editorial, The Record, August 11, 2002](#)

Equity in the air -- finally?

We're touched by Bay Area's sudden concern over Central Valley pollution

Want to bet San Joaquin Valley residents are a step closer to breathing cleaner air?

While it seems wrong to gamble with our health, that's just what lawmakers had to do this week to get Bay Area motorists to accept the same, tougher Smog Check II for their cars that Valley vehicles face.

With up to 27 percent of San Joaquin County's smog blowing in from the Bay Area, according to some estimates, logic would dictate that cleaner-burning cars there should help alleviate smog here.

Not necessarily so, said air-quality officials in the only state region exempt from Smog Check II.

Showing sudden concern for the Valley's health, Bay Area officials said stricter smog standards there actually could lead to worse Valley air conditions in some spots.

Polluted Valley air already often exceeds federal health levels and causes increased cases of child asthma and cancer.

Bay Area officials cited modeling research from the Center of Environmental Research and Technology at University of California, Riverside -- another place where they have to worry a lot about filthy air migrating inland from the coast.

Clean up Bay Area car exhaust and maybe smog hanging over Tracy will diminish, but people in north Stockton could suffer dirtier air, they said.

Valley air officials were skeptical.

The UC models may not accurately reflect the small change in emissions the stricter smog checks should yield, they said.

However, to get the bill through the key Senate Transportation Committee on a 12-1 vote, including support from Bay Area lawmakers, bill backers accepted an amendment ordering the state Air Resources Board to form a peer review team of scientists to look over the UC study.

The research could be right, but we'll take our chances with cleaner-burning Bay Area cars for now.

If the bill does end up on Gov. Gray Davis' desk, as is expected, he has said he will sign it into law.

[Editorial, Tulare Advance-Register, August 10, 2002](#)

Air exemption should stand pending study

Faced with a lawsuit from environmentalists, the Environmental Protection Agency has ended an exemption for farmers from federal air-pollution standards.

The EPA ruled last week that farmers must now meet some of the same requirements as other industries. Most affected will be larger farms and dairies. Immediately, the state Farm Bureau filed suit to block the regulations.

Among the key issues is what facts the EPA is using to make its decision. It is said that farming contributes to the bad air in the Valley, but there is no evidence to either prove or disprove that belief. There is reportedly a study under way to determine just that, but results are not expected for three more years. In the meantime, farmers will have to comply.

Under the Clean Air Act, farmers who are determined to emit "major" amounts of air pollution will need to get permits in order to operate. The EPA defines "major" as 50 tons per year or more of volatile organic compounds or nitrogen oxides, or 25 tons or more of a combination of hazardous air pollutants.

Exactly how they'll obtain readings from farming operations such as dairies has not been explained.

The EPA wanted to continue the exemption for farms and dairies until the study could be completed, but as part of a settlement of environmentalists' lawsuit, the agency agreed to lift the exemption.

What it means is large farms, especially dairies and feedlots, will now have to pay a fee, file paperwork, and get permits to operate. It does not necessarily mean the air will be any cleaner and no one is saying what will happen if the study finds farms do not significantly contribute to pollution.

[Letter to the Editor, Modesto Bee, August 12, 2002](#)

Keep Amtrak subsidies

Don Shaw courageously defied conventional wisdom by defending government subsidies for a national rail network ("If we can subsidize airlines, we can help Amtrak," Opinions, Aug. 1). All other rich countries do this for precisely the reason that Shaw cites: Rail transportation provides a pleasant and environmentally friendly alternative to automobile transportation.

Odd, isn't it, that the people who attack "subsidies" for Amtrak are usually the same people who want to increase "investment" in automobile and airline transportation?

Kudos to Shaw for exposing this hypocrisy. Taxpayers spend billions of dollars per year on highway and airport construction and maintenance, air traffic control and airport security, and law enforcement on highways.

Until our leaders in Washington consider cutting off these subsidies, they should stop talking about ending subsidies for Amtrak.

LEE R. MILLER

Modesto

[Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee, August 10, 2002](#)
High cost, small gain

By Kevin Hall
Fresno

Annie Lokrantz [letter Aug. 6] wrongly suggests Fresno's filthy air would be significantly improved by rail consolidation. According to the Council of Fresno County Governments' study of the proposal, consolidation would cut ozone-causing pollutants emitted by idling cars by fewer than 50 tons per year. That's not even two-tenths of 1% of Fresno County traffic's annual pollution load of 30,000 tons.

And at what cost? More than \$400 million. Measures aimed at reducing air pollution must be evaluated on a cost-per-ton basis. At a meager 50 tons, rail consolidation would cost a staggering \$8 million per ton. For half the cost we could have a modern rapid transit system throughout Fresno-Clovis. Pollution would drop by thousands of tons due to reduced traffic congestion everywhere and by less car use. The rest of the money could replace every diesel-powered school and transit bus in the county with zero-emission vehicles.

Proponents of rail consolidation are not champions of air quality and should not masquerade as such. They are shamelessly exploiting the issue to pursue their narrow agenda, and their demands are not limited to \$150 million of Measure C tax money. Through state assemblyman Mike Briggs they are pushing legislation (AB 2078) to qualify rail consolidation for state-controlled air quality funds. This would allow them to divert millions more away from truly cost-effective control methods.

As for Measure C, rail consolidation cannot become the tail that wags that \$3 billion dog, at least not if you wish to breathe healthy air.