

## **Air quality dips as Valley sizzles**

**Residents urged to take it easy outside, skimp on energy use.**

By Barbara Anderson

[The Fresno Bee, Thursday, July 14, 2005](#)

It's the time of year when everyone works up a sweat in the central San Joaquin Valley - without trying.

But air quality and health officials say those who work outdoors or choose to exercise in the heat should take it easy.

Temperatures are soaring and so are the levels of air pollutants.

Fresno reached 105 degrees on Wednesday and likely will be at least that today. Visalia should peak at 104 today and Madera will sizzle at 106.

Californians are being urged to reduce energy use this afternoon as the fourth day of a heat wave keeps air conditioners humming.

People also are being asked to drive less and to stay indoors as much as possible to spare their lungs.

Today's air quality in Fresno is forecast to be unhealthy for everyone, reaching 156 on the Air Quality Index that measures smog levels. The higher the number, the worse the air, and an AQI from 151 to 200 signals bad air for anyone breathing it. Air quality with a rating higher than 200 is very unhealthy or hazardous.

Kern County should have the worst air in the San Joaquin Valley today, with an AQI of 190 expected.

Tulare residents will be inhaling air with an AQI of 142, which is unhealthy for sensitive groups of people. And in Madera County, the smog index will be 104, also unhealthy for people with lung, heart and other health problems. Friday won't be any better - and could be worse.

"Unhealthy air-quality conditions will continue across the San Joaquin Valley, especially Fresno County southward," says Shawn Ferreria, a meteorologist and smog forecaster at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

If one-hour concentrations of ozone, the primary ingredient in smog, spike in the next couple of days, it could signal Ferreria to issue a state-mandated smog health advisory. During a health advisory, teachers, coaches and principals are told to discontinue any sustained, outdoor rigorous exercise or sports activities for children. And all residents are encouraged to avoid strenuous outdoor activity and stay indoors, if possible.

Levels of ozone in the Valley typically peak in late afternoon, roughly between 3 and 6 p.m.

The air quality didn't reach a health advisory stage Wednesday, but the air wasn't good to breathe. Air quality in Fresno was 147 on the AQI, just shy of being unhealthy for everyone.

Robert Bisbee knew riding full speed on his bicycle at Woodward Park wasn't following air officials' advice.

"It was a little crazy," he says. "But it was about the only time I have after work."

A service technician, Bisbee is training for the Tour de Granite 17-mile bicycle race at Dinkey Creek in August. "I can't afford to let it [the air quality] get in my way - at least in the next month," Bisbee, 39, says.

Ozone is caustic to the lungs. Dr. David Pepper, who runs the asthma education and management program at Community Medical Centers, says breathing the corrosive chemical should be avoided.

Pepper says "Spare the Air" days should be called more often in the Valley to encourage people to reduce smog-producing activities, such as driving. Today is a Spare the Air day. People are

asked to voluntarily avoid unnecessary use of their automobiles, boats and off-road vehicles. They're asked to carpool, use public transit and eat lunch at work.

The public also is being urged to observe a "Flex Your Power Now! Day" today and Friday by the California Independent System Operator, which runs the state's power grid.

The California ISO says it doesn't anticipate any major problem meeting power demands, but the system will be in heavy use. The forecast calls for demand to top out at 46,182 megawatts at 4 p.m. today. The record peak for demand was 45,597 megawatts, set on Sept. 8, 2004. One megawatt equals 1 million watts and is capable of lighting up about 750 homes.

People can conserve by setting thermostats at 78 degrees or higher, cooling with fans, drawing the drapes, turning off unnecessary lights and appliances, and using big appliances early in the morning or late at night.

About 5,700 PG&E customers in north Fresno and parts of Clovis were without power about 5 p.m. Wednesday when a circuit overloaded.

"It got heated up with folks getting home from work and turning on their air conditioning at the same time," said company spokesman Jonathan Franks.

All but 100 customers had their power restored by 9:30 p.m.

While temperatures are pushing electricity usage to limits, the National Weather Service says Wednesday's high in Fresno of 105 didn't break any records. The all-time high occurred 100 years ago, when a temperature of 115 degrees was recorded on July 8, 1905.

And the record high for July 13 was set in 1983, when Fresno reached 110 degrees.

Says meteorologist Daniel Harty: "It could be worse. As hot as it is, it's been worse."

## **Spare the Air day**

[Modesto Bee, Thursday, July 14, 2005](#)

The air quality in Stanislaus, Merced and San Joaquin counties is expected to be unhealthy today. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has declared a Spare the Air Day, asking residents to limit outdoor exertion, especially from 3 to 7 p.m., when ozone levels usually are highest. Residents also are asked to voluntarily postpone emission-causing activities such as making unnecessary auto trips, using gas-powered lawn equipment or igniting charcoal barbecues with lighter fluid.

## **Triple digits double trouble for your lungs**

By Malcolm MacLachlan

[Tracy Press, Thursday, July 14, 2005](#)

Ozoney enough for ya?

With hot, still, baking air, the San Joaquin County Pollution Control District has declared a Spare the Air day today for the entire eight-county San Joaquin Valley.

A sudden rise in temperatures - the National Weather Service predicts 105 degrees Fahrenheit in Stockton, and 103 in Tracy - combined with a lack of wind has created dangerous conditions, according to district spokesman Anthony Presto.

Such weather leads to a troubling chemical reaction. Nitrous oxides produced by cars and other vehicles mix with volatile organic compounds, which come from gas, paint fumes and other sources. Sunlight cooks this combination into ground-level ozone, a corrosive substance that irritates the lungs. These conditions are always hazardous, Presto said, but the area is particularly susceptible now because recent cool weather has left a more of those chemicals in the air to react with each other. The air quality index in San Joaquin County today is projected to measure 104, making it unhealthy for sensitive groups. Down in Kern County, the measurement

will be 190 -- unhealthy for everyone. These figures represent a score designed to translate air quality measures into an easy-to-understand number.

Presto said the district is asking people to avoid fume-producing activities such as filling gas tanks, painting and mowing the lawn - or at least confine them to early morning or later evening hours.

But mainly they want people to carpool, telecommute or take public transportation, and bring their lunches to work. As an incentive, the Altamont Commuter Express and several other transit systems will offer free rides today.

"Motor vehicles are the source of 60 percent of the Valley's air pollution," Presto said. "Individuals really can make a difference."

## **Sizzling Summer Days**

**As temperatures climb, the valley does its best to beat the 100-degree heat**

by Blair Craddock

[Modesto Bee, Wednesday, July 13, 2005](#)

The calendar says summer arrived three weeks ago. But it didn't really feel like it until Tuesday. It was hot.

And it's going to get hotter.

Modesto and Merced topped out at 100degrees Tuesday — and they were among the cooler places in the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

Stockton reached 104.

Ceres, Manteca and Mariposa all hit 102.

Turlock, Patterson and Atwater were at 101.

Sonora was just under the century mark at 98, but that could change today — the forecast is for 102 in the foothills, as well as in Modesto and many other parts of the valley.

Mike McAuliffe, a meteorologist with AccuWeather.com, blamed a ridge of high pressure sitting over the West Coast for blocking the cooling delta breezes.

The heat wave is expected to peak Friday and Saturday, when temperatures could reach 104 in Modesto.

Tuesday, people in the valley endured the heat when they had to or — even better — escaped it.

A.S. Attwal, a mail carrier with the downtown Modesto post office, was one who couldn't get away. All day, he worked under the scorching sun.

"The mail has to go out, rain or shine," Attwal said.

His only line of defense is water; he estimated that he drank about a gallon and a half Tuesday.

At Modesto's Orchard Elementary School, fifth-graders coming back from lunch remarked on how "cool" the classroom was, said teacher Karen Ferrell.

"If we didn't have air conditioning, we would truly be suffering," Ferrell said.

Arlene Lapachet, 49, fled from the afternoon heat to the Brenden Theatres in Modesto. "I don't have air conditioning in my house," she said.

Ken Locke of Modesto found relief in Graceada Park: He lay on a blanket in the shade, covered with a wet T-shirt. He'd arrived there with his family at 7 a.m. Locke said, and didn't plan to leave until after 7 p.m.

McAuliffe said the last time Modesto had a prolonged heat wave was 2003, when daytime temperatures soared to at least 100 for nine days, from July 14 to July 22.

MID planning for peak use

The hottest day ever recorded in the city was June 15, 1961, when it hit 112 degrees, said Maree Hawkins, spokeswoman for the Modesto Irrigation District.

Electricity supplies are expected to be adequate for the heat wave, said Hawkins and Mark Hendrickson, spokesman for Pacific Gas & Electric.

"When it gets hot, people turn on their air conditioners," Hawkins said. "They use more electricity. We do plan for that."

She said MID has planned for a peak capacity of 653 megawatts — "at 5:30 p.m., on a very hot day when the canneries are working."

During the 2003 heat wave, use peaked July 29 at 624 megawatts, she said, adding that the district can buy more power, if necessary.

Hendrickson anticipates no problems for PG&E's California customers, "but we still encourage people to do everything they can to conserve energy."

He recommended setting thermostats at 78 degrees at home, or 85 if the house will be unoccupied for more than four hours. He also suggested closing the blinds and turning off computers when they're not in use.

Visitors and residents in the Sierra and foothills more or less took the heat in stride Tuesday. In Yosemite National Park, where it was only 91, visitors swam and floated in the cold Merced River.

On Highway 49 near Lake Don Pedro, Josef Kozac, 46, a visitor from the Czech Republic, pedaled his pack-laden bicycle uphill toward Sonora.

"Drinking a lot of water, and keep on going," is how he deals with the heat, said Kozac, who's on a round-the-world bike ride that started 480 days ago in Olomouc, his home city. He's aiming to reach Boston by Sept. 10.

At the Chinese Camp Trading Post, a combination bar, grocery store and gift shop, owner Michael Read relaxed in the breeze from a large fan.

During hot spells, Read said, he sees "quite a few" cyclists who stop at the store.

"I try to help them out," he said. "They always seem to not have enough water. I think they overestimate their ability to take the heat."

In Sonora, Dusten Dennis, 28, and Clint Smitheman, 34, were behind the counter of the downtown Sierra Nevada Adventure Company.

"What I'm planning on doing is going over to my co-worker's house and jumping in his pool,"

Dennis said. "Other than that, since I was born and raised here, I don't really mind it. Maybe my denying it's too hot is my way of coping."

Smitheman, the one with the pool, said his way of dealing with the heat is just to travel where it's cooler.

"A bike ride uphill," he said. "Fifteen miles uphill is 15 degrees cooler. Other than that, I like to drive up to the Sonora Pass and ski since there is still some snow."

"I'm serious."

Stanislaus County's airquality levels remained moderate Tuesday, and the forecast is for more of the same in the Modesto and Stockton areas today.

But air quality is expected to be unhealthy for sensitive groups in Merced County, where the San Joaquin Valley Air Quality District declared today a "Spare the Air" day.

"Generally, when you have very warm conditions, ozone levels begin to creep up," said Anthony Presto, a spokesman for the district.

Ozone forms, he said, when the sun bakes pollutants — nitrogen oxides, from car exhaust, and volatile organic compounds, from sources that include dairy emissions.

Heat also intensifies odors, Presto acknowledged.

[Bakersfield Californian, Editorial, Thursday, July 14, 2005:](#)

Money flushed down toilet

**Orange County sewer district squanders money on finding its 'corporate soul,' rather than better treating sludge.**

Do you hear the chanting? Thanks to the *Orange County Register*, we learn it is the sound of Orange County toilets flushing. It is the sound of Southland poop being hauled over the Tehachapi Mountains and plopped onto Kern County farmland.

It's the sound of Orange County Sanitation District officials paying more than a half million dollars to fine-tune their dharma.

"Dharma" means "protection," according to a Dharma Web site, "By practicing Buddha's teachings, we protect ourselves from suffering and problems. All the problems we experience during daily life originate in ignorance, and the method for eliminating ignorance is to practice Dharma."

Rather than eliminating their ignorance through Dharma (*all together now, chant: Om stick our poo to you, Om stick our poo to you*) OCSD officials should be spending district money processing Orange County's sewage so it won't pollute Kern County.

The Orange County newspaper reported the OCSD is paying a spiritual leadership guru \$180,000 a year to help search for its "corporate soul."

The \$15,000-a-month, multi-year contract with "spiritual dimension" specialist Dharma Consulting was routinely renewed in May. By next year, OCSD will have paid the San Diego County-based Dharma \$570,000 for awakening the district's corporate spirit. Dharma founder, Eric Klein, is a 25-year practitioner and teacher of meditation, and one of the few Westerners to be ordained a yoga priest, according to his Web page.

Some district workers reportedly view the program as "wiggly" (*no duh*), while others see it as valuable (*particularly for the yoga priest/consultant.*)

But as customers read this week that their sewer fees were paying for the district's "spiritual awakening," they started howling.

A blogger on [www.ocblog.net](http://www.ocblog.net) protested that the district had gone "from treating crap to buying crap."

Those of us in far away Kern County should be laughing our toilets off at the New Age mumbo jumbo OCSD is squandering its money on.

But strangely, it's not funny. The district hauls its stinking sludge to Kern County because it's a cheap way to get rid of its sewage. Whining that other alternatives would be too costly, the district is fighting efforts to ban the hauling of its sludge to Kern County.

But if the district has money to waste on a spiritual guru, it has money to invest in properly treating and disposing its waste so it won't [pollute Kern County's land, water and air](#).