

UC Merced professor can pinpoint pollution origin

By Mark Grossi, The Fresno Bee

In the Modesto Bee, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

You might have just breathed microscopic bits of debris from a dairy, an almond orchard or a tomato field.

It might not matter to you how much came from the dairy, the orchard or the field.

But wouldn't it help air quality officials sharpen their attack on pollution in the San Joaquin Valley if they knew?

A researcher for UC Merced thinks so.

Wolfgang Rogge, an associate professor of engineering, says he can analyze the particles and trace them back to farm fields, dairies and feed lots where they originated.

But state and regional air officials have not granted him \$390,000 to survey actual farms and determine how much debris comes from each type of agriculture.

He said he pitched his idea in November to the California Air Resources Board. Rogge hasn't heard from the board, but he remains convinced that the research would help the Valley.

"If we get the funding, we can identify the biggest sources and get more pollution controls on those sources," he said.

The state board did not respond to requests to comment on Rogge's proposal.

One official with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says research money has been channeled into evaluating farm pollution control measures. But he said the district is impressed with Rogge's approach.

"His proposal has potential -- more potential than others we've seen," said James Sweet, air quality analyst and project planner.

"But we have limitations on resources. He is looking at the source of the pollution. We are evaluating the other end, the pollution controls."

For such wind-blown debris, the Valley is a long way from being healthy by the stringent state standard, which this region violates almost 150 times per year.

But air quality authorities focus on less-proactive federal standards, because they carry costly sanctions for failure to meet deadlines and achieve clean air.

By the federal standard, it has been years since the Valley has had an official violation for this pollutant, called PM-10 and made up of chemicals, bits of plants and other coarse materials.

Valley air officials said PM-10 has decreased greatly over the past several years because of new regulations. Farmers now water unpaved roads and make fewer passes with machinery when they prepare their fields for planting.

Still, more than half of the remaining problem comes from farming operations, according to state statistics.

Regional air officials said they will continue working on reductions to avoid future federal violations.

Rogge wants to contribute, having already written two studies published in the journal *Atmospheric Environment*. His studies discuss detecting such particle contents as sugars in crops and fatty acids in cattle.

Now he needs to collect samples at farms, dairies and feed lots.

He can identify the sources of the debris and determine how much of it comes from each place.

Rogge said his work may show that one type of farm needs more controls while another is spending too much money on unnecessary controls.

"It may turn out that very simple control measures will take care of the problems," he said. "But we won't know until we have measured the amount of particulate matter coming from each type of farm."

Martinez refinery is top polluter

Tesoro had 1.8 million pounds of toxic releases in 2006 to lead Bay Area for fourth year in a row

By Mike Taugher, Staff Writer

Contra Costa Times, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

Tesoro's Golden Eagle refinery near Martinez was again the Bay Area's top polluter in 2006, according to data on toxic releases made available Thursday by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The refinery, which is the second-largest in the region, reported releases of 1.8 million pounds of toxic chemicals to air, water or land. That figure was down from 2.5 million pounds in 2005.

Overall, the EPA said toxic releases in 2006 from 1,357 facilities in California were down 2.8 percent to 45.2 million pounds from the previous year.

Tesoro's refinery has historically lagged behind the other refineries in installing upgrades. It was the region's biggest polluter every year since at least 2003, according to an EPA toxics database.

Mike Marcy, a Tesoro spokesman, said most of the toxic material reported by the refinery was ammonia that air quality regulators require to control smog.

A \$575 million upgrade that is scheduled to be done this year will slash toxic pollution from the Tesoro refinery to about 500,000 pounds a year, according to Marcy.

"This is replacing 1950s technology that was here when Tesoro bought the refinery in 2002," he said.

The second-largest polluter in the Bay Area was Valero's refinery in Benicia, which released 1.7 million pounds of toxic chemicals last year. That refinery, with a 144,000 barrel-per-day capacity, is the fourth-largest of the Bay Area's five refineries.

Valero spokesman Chris Howe said most of the increase in reported emissions in 2006 -- double the figure reported the previous year -- was due to revisions that were made after tests of ammonia releases from some stacks showed higher emissions. He also said the refinery reported higher releases of nitrates to the water. The refinery also disposed of lead and other metals as part of routine maintenance done in 2006, which inflated the number.

Asked why the region's fourth-largest refinery would have the second-highest emissions, Howe said it was difficult to say but suggested the possibility that the other refineries might have more recent upgrades.

The Benicia refinery, at nearly 30 years old, is the newest of the five. The older refineries have had to perform upgrades, and when those upgrades are done newer pollution control equipment is installed. He said the Benicia plant "is just now coming up to be able to do" those upgrades.

Chevron's Richmond refinery, meanwhile, is by far the largest in the Bay Area with a capacity of nearly 243,000 barrels a day. It is also the oldest. It reported 1.2 million pounds of toxic releases in 2006, making it the third-largest polluter in the region.

"We're one of the most energy-efficient refineries in the U.S.," said Chevron spokeswoman Camille Prisela.

The Toxics Release Inventory is a database of emissions from large industrial sources. The EPA has collected the data since 1987 as part of a law that was passed after a Union Carbide chemical plant in 1984 leaked poisonous gas and killed thousands of people in Bhopal, India.

Top 10 Polluters

Bay Area top 10 toxic polluters in 2006:

Tesoro refinery, Martinez, 1.8 million pounds

Valero refinery, Benicia, 1.7 million pounds

Chevron refinery, Richmond, 1.2 million pounds

Shell refinery, Martinez, 772,000 pounds

ConocoPhillips refinery, Rodeo, 595,000 pounds

Clean Harbors, San Jose, 371,000 pounds

New United Motor Manufacturing, Fremont, 370,000 pounds

United State Pipe & Foundry, Union City, 337,000 pounds

Criterion Catalysts & Technologies, Pittsburg, 240,000 pounds

Tyco Electronics, Menlo Park, 217,000 pounds

Port's rail projects raise concerns

Environmentalists, residents worry trucks-to-trains switch will increase air pollution

By Denis Cuff, Staff Writer

In the Tri-Valley Herald, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

The Port of Oakland must show it won't worsen diesel air pollution before getting up to \$445 million in state bond money for railroad and trucking improvements to move more freight, East Bay residents and environmentalists told transportation officials Thursday.

The port and railroad companies are asking the California Transportation Commission for a big slice of a 2006 state transportation ballot measure.

The port wants to use the money for railroad, rail yard and road projects to ease freight-shipping bottlenecks.

Most of the money will be spent on rail projects, enabling the port to move a higher percentage of goods by train rather than by truck on crowded highways.

"We believe the projects can be something positive, but they must be environmentally responsible," said Swati Prakash, program director of the Oakland-based Pacific Institute.

In a commission hearing in Oakland, Prakash and several other speakers said the port's application for bond money lacks details and commitment to limiting pollution while doubling its handling of containers.

More trains, environmentalists said, could mean more pollution for those living near the port in West Oakland, as well as those living near tracks between Oakland and Richmond where rail capacity also will be increased.

Prakash called for the port to set up a community committee on reducing pollution through measures such as getting cleaner locomotives and trucks.

The California Transportation Commission is scheduled March 13 to get a staff recommendation on allocating \$2.5 billion from the trade corridor improvement fund, part of Proposition 1B that state voters approved in 2006.

"Before the commission hands over taxpayer dollars to subsidize port expansion, the port needs to show community residents it is serious about dealing with pollution," said Doug Bloch, an Oakland resident.

Lee Jones, a North Richmond resident with asthma, said he worries the rail improvements will lead to more trains showering more diesel soot on West Contra Costa residents.

"You're ignoring the concerns of the communities like mine," he said.

The Transportation Commission has approved guidelines saying the funded projects should not worsen pollution.

Spelling out and assessing how that goal will be achieved is going to take detailed environmental studies, commission advisers said.

Those studies will be done after the commission makes its initial bond money allocation in April, but before the commission actually distributes the money to individual projects down the road, commission administrators said.

Omar Benjamin, the Port of Oakland's executive director, said the port will work with community members on minimizing pollution.

"We understand their concerns, and we will do more to provide more details about project impacts," he said.

Moving a higher percentage of goods by rail will help the port minimize pollution, because trains are generally a cleaner shipping method than fleets of trucks, Benjamin said.

Environmentalists, however, said they worry that train traffic through the port will increase so much that the expansion projects will lead to a net increase in pollution.

Several business groups testified that the port improvements will boost the state economy by enabling more goods to be moved faster.

Legislator seeks greener vehicles for state fleet

Lawmaker hopes bill will force state to clarify rules for buying vehicles

By Kimberly Kindy, MediaNews Sacramento Bureau

In the Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- A California lawmaker is expected to introduce a bill today that would require better fuel efficiency and lower emissions from mid-sized and heavy-duty vehicles driven by state employees.

The bill would expand the scope of a law that the Legislature passed last year requiring the state to rank passenger vehicles in its fleet based on a set of economic and environmental standards, and then purchase cars and trucks at the top of that list.

Assemblyman Ted Lieu, D-El Segundo, wrote both bills and said he thinks it will help "green" the more than 50,000 vehicles that make up the state fleet.

The bills were introduced in response to a MediaNews investigation about the state's purchase of more than 1,000 "flex-fuel" vehicles designed to run on high-grade ethanol to reduce gasoline consumption and improve air quality.

However, two years after some of the purchases, not one of those 1,000 vehicles had burned a single drop of alternative fuel.

Lieu said it became clear that the state was using flawed criteria for determining its vehicle buys. The new "flex-fuel" vehicles, for example, were large sedans and trucks -- bigger than many of the smaller model cars they displaced off the old buying list -- and therefore more polluting and less fuel efficient when running on standard gasoline.

The state Department of General Services made the purchases and has oversight responsibility for all vehicle buys made by other state departments and agencies.

"I think this process is forcing them to rethink how they make vehicle purchases," Lieu said of General Services. "Their reasoning before was haphazard and didn't always result in the best decisions being made."

The ranking system is being developed by the department in consultation with the state Air Resources Board and the Energy Commission. It must be completed by the end of the year. The

law requires that the department take into account several complex calculations on the ways a vehicle pollutes beyond simple emissions.

For example, one new factor would be the type of fuel that would be used in a vehicle -- and the pollution caused to create that fuel.

General Services' spokeswoman Beth Mills said that the department has not yet devised the ranking system and could not say how it might affect future vehicle buys. However, she said the department would meet the Dec. 31 deadline for completing this first piece, which applies to state passenger vehicles. The deadline for Lieu's proposed law on the large vehicles in the fleet, if passed, takes effect a year later, on Dec. 31, 2009.

The state has about 39,000 passenger vehicles and about 10,000 medium and heavy-duty vehicles in its fleet. In terms of annual purchases, last year, the state bought 4,528 passenger vehicles and another 678 medium-sized and heavy-duty vehicles.

Governors try to advance clean energy

By Andrew Welsh-Huggins, Associated Press Writer
Modesto Bee, Friday, February 22, 2008

Governors who want clean energy to be a national priority are trying to bring together states with wildly different ways of producing power, like tapping ocean temperature differences off Hawaii and mining coal in West Virginia.

But a souring economy has tightened state budgets and forced spending cuts that could temporarily short circuit renewable energy development.

Twenty states now project budget gaps, which together total \$34 billion for 2009.

The National Governors Association launched its "Securing a Clean Energy Future" initiative in December and will reintroduce the plan this weekend at its winter meeting in Washington, D.C. The plan emphasizes promoting renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The same meeting includes a panel discussion Sunday titled "Traditional Domestic Energy in a Clean Energy Future."

The association's clean energy initiative provides flexibility for states to craft a plan that works for them, said Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, the association chairman.

"Coal states can work toward developing advanced clean coal technologies," Pawlenty said in an e-mail to The Associated Press. "States with significant wind or crops that can be used for fuel, like ethanol or other biofuels, are tapping into those resources."

Pawlenty has embraced renewable fuels, conservation and a requirement to cut global warming emissions in Minnesota by 80 percent by mid-century.

He also supports clean coal technology and coal-burning power plants where carbon is captured and sequestered.

Pawlenty said the national association has worked closely with governor's offices around the country to bring states together on the issue.

"Although there are certainly differences in how each state approaches energy policy, there is consensus that more needs to be done to create a cleaner, more secure and more independent energy future," he said.

Some coal states say coal gets a bad rap even as it remains a viable power source.

"Anybody can talk and beat up coal: They don't like it; it's dirty; it does this and this," said West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin, a Democrat and chairman of the association's natural resources committee. "But I can assure you, they're not going to turn their lights or their demand for energy off."

A greenhouse gas accord signed by 10 Midwest governors in November referred to the region's renewable energy resources like wind, solar and ethanol.

But it also emphasized the region's "extensive and secure coal reserves, combined with extensive geologic reservoirs for storing carbon dioxide."

In Ohio, facing a budget shortfall of at least \$733 million by June 2009, Democratic Gov. Ted Strickland has proposed a stimulus package that includes spending \$250 million on alternative energy sources such as solar, wind and clean coal.

"If states like Ohio want to overcome their economic challenges, they've got to embrace advanced energy technologies and renewable sources," Strickland said Thursday. "This idea of clean, green energy is no longer a tie-dyed T-shirt kind of idea. This is mainstream economics."

States will push strategies that depend on their own situations, said Steve Clemmer, research director for the Union of Concerned Scientists clean energy program.

"Where the tension is going to come from is the allocation of resources that go toward the various solutions," he said. "Which solutions are going to get more emphasis will vary depending on the state."

Last month, Hawaii Gov. Linda Lingle proposed a new state agency to develop business ventures in renewable energy, that could be based on wind, ocean thermal differences and even algae. Today, Hawaii is the most oil-dependent state in the country.

In his State of the State speech, South Dakota Gov. Mike Rounds proposed new incentives to increase biodiesel production with a side benefit of helping the state's soy bean farmers. But Rounds also promoted a new oil refinery and a major new Canadian oil pipeline that would run through North and South Dakota.

"Huge supplies of renewable fuels for South Dakota and nationwide use will not happen overnight, nor will they be able to totally replace petroleum," Rounds said in his Jan. 8 speech.

Industry's Toxic Chemicals Declined

By H. Josef Hebert, The Associated Press

In the Contra Costa Times, Washington Post and other papers, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

WASHINGTON -- Toxic chemical pollution from industrial plants and factories declined by 2 percent in 2006 despite increases in the mining and petroleum sectors, the government said Thursday.

Companies reported that 4.25 billion pounds of toxic chemicals were released into the air, onto land, into waterways, injected deep into the ground, or stored on site as waste. That is about 105 million pounds less than 2005.

About one-third of the chemicals, or 1.41 billion pounds, were reported released into the air, 7 percent less than in 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency said. An additional 250 million pounds of chemicals went into surface waterways, a 3 percent decline.

The annual Toxic Release Inventory Report covers 2006, the latest year for which figures are available:

_The metal mining industry reported it released into the environment or disposed of 1.22 billion pounds of toxic chemicals. That was 4 percent more than in 2005.

_The electric utility industry had the second largest release, 1.02 billion pounds. But it also reported the largest decrease, about 6 percent.

_Next was the chemical industry, which reported a drop of 4 percent, to 514 million pounds.

_The petroleum sector reported 76 million pounds of releases, an increase of 8 percent.

_About one-third of the chemicals, or 1.4 billion pounds, were deposited on land.

_Industries injected about 14 percent, or 606 million pounds, injected into deep underground wells.

The 2006 figures reflected a change that the EPA allowed, reducing the amount of information that some companies needed to report. Companies could turn in shorter, less detailed forms if they used less than 5,000 pounds of toxic chemicals or released less than 2,000 pounds.

In the past, more detailed information had to be provided in longer forms at a threshold of 500 pounds. The new rule maintains that reporting threshold for only some of the most dangerous chemicals.

Opponents of the change have said the more lenient reporting allows some facilities to hide data about toxic chemical releases. The EPA said the changes only streamlined the reporting process.

The EPA said 22,880 industrial and manufacturing facilities submitted 87,900 forms on the 2006 data. The reporting covered 650 chemicals.

Industry's Toxic Chemicals Declined

By The Associated Press

In the N.Y. Times and other papers, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Environmental Protection Agency says toxic chemical pollution from industry declined by about 2 percent in 2006 despite increases in releases by the mining and petroleum industries.

Companies reported that more than 4 billion pounds of toxic chemicals were released into the air, onto land, into waterways, injected deep into the ground or kept as waste on site.

About one-third of the chemicals, or 1.4 billion pounds, were reported released into the air, a decline of 7 percent from 2005. The figures for 2006 are the latest available.

[Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008:](#)

Stop arguing, start reacting

A recent letter writer missed the big picture. ("Media has bought into 'crisis'".) Will he also argue that the air in our valley is as pure as it ever was? Or, perhaps, that a new, cheap and self-sustaining supply of fuel is blossoming beneath us? Or, that our landfills are shrinking?

Regardless of the why, we must change things if we wish to maintain our lifestyles. And, it begins with each of us. Bundle together trips in the car, bring your own bags to the grocery store, buy green when you can.

Small steps rolled together by many people will make a difference. Remember the impact of reducing our use of electricity a few years ago. Stop arguing and start reacting.

Claudia Keith, Bakersfield

[Letter to the Contra Costa Times, Friday, Feb. 22, 2008:](#)

Smoke from fireplace damages us all

To you who burn wood in your fireplaces, I don't smoke cigars in your living room, why would you blow your wood smoke into mine?

Dr. Janice Kim, public health medical officer with the Air Toxicity and Epidemiology Branch of the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, said in a Jan. 20 article in the San Francisco Chronicle: "People who burn wood (in their fireplaces) are exposing themselves, their neighbors and their families to harmful compounds including carcinogens."

Granted, sitting in front of a crackling fire in your living room fireplace on a chilly night conveys a feeling of warmth and contentment. However, these pleasures come at a high price. Studies have found that the microscopic mix of solids and liquid droplets in wood smoke are comprised of

acids, organic chemicals, metals, dust particles and allergens --- quite different from the emissions from burning fossil fuels (heating oil, natural gas).

People who do not have a gas or oil heating system or burn wood because that is the only source of heat they can afford may be excused; but others who burn wood because it is "fashionable" or "fun" must be aware (according to the EPA) that wood smoke emits microscopic particles so small that they get lodged deep in the lungs and sometimes in the bloodstream. In the lungs they can cause structural and chemical changes. Researchers also suspect exposure to the smoke can cause heart attacks and arrhythmias. Long term exposure can reduce lung function and cause bronchitis, asthma attacks, susceptibility to infections and premature death.

On cool, foggy nights when the air is still, the wood-smoke laden air hangs close to the ground and there is no escape from inhaling these dangerous emissions -- even inside your own home. And adding insult to injury, some people burn "cheap" wood -- green wood and construction waste -- which burn really dirty. With all this negative evidence against wood burning, why would anyone want to subject themselves, their families and their neighbors to such potential dangers?

It is not hard to understand that since 1998, about 40 cities and counties in the Bay Area have adopted regulations, mainly prohibiting construction of fireplaces in new homes; and many cities have banned wood burning on bad air days.

So please, for my sake and yours. douse those wood-burning fireplaces.

Larry Gee

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a protest against the pollution control enforced on only truck drivers in Long Beach. For more information on this clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Protestan por imponer control de contaminación en Long Beach a conductores

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, February 21, 2008

Por lo menos dos de las mayores organizaciones que protegen la salud de comunidades con aire contaminado protestaron porque la mesa directiva del puerto de Long Beach reiteró su decisión de regular únicamente a los camioneros y dejar fuera a empresas y contratistas.

El Concilio para la Defensa de los Recursos Naturales y la Asociación Estadounidense para la salud Pulmonar consideraron que el reglamento en Long Beach está mal enfocado al dejar fuera a las empresas transportistas pero sancionar a conductores.

Los puertos de Long Beach y Los Angeles son considerados oficialmente las mayores fuentes de contaminación del aire en la región.

Maricela Velásquez

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