

Fresno County officials tend to heart attack victim in D.C.

By Michael Doyle / Bee Washington Bureau
Fresno Bee, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009

Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims and county supervisor Judy Case leapt to the rescue in Washington, D.C., Wednesday afternoon, when they came upon a man in apparent cardiac arrest.

Inside a Capitol Hill Metro station, as a crowd gathered, Mims began doing chest compressions while Case, a trained nurse, took care of delivering breaths.

"He was losing his color, and his pupils were fixed," Mims said, "but by the time the EMTs got there, his color was back and he was breathing."

Farmer turns to cow power

From Robert Rodriguez at the World Ag Expo
Fresnobee.com, Wed., Feb. 11, 2009

Cow power hit center stage at the World Ag Expo.

Tulare County dairy operator Rob Hilarides fired up his shiny big rig Wednesday in a demonstration of how he is using biomethane to power his heavy duty trucks. Hilarides has taken cow manure collected from his Lindsay dairy and converted it into a fuel capable of operating two large trucks and six pickup trucks.

The project is part of a partnership that includes the dairy industry and state and local governments. Hilarides and state officials say his cow-powered trucks hold great promise for creating a renewable source of energy as well as reducing harmful vehicle emissions.

With his new fuel supply, Hilarides has eliminated his consumption of 200 gallons of diesel fuel and 40 gallons of gasoline. To help celebrate the project, participants toasted the event. Of course, it was with milk.

Plug 'em in, move 'em out

By Tim Sheehan
Fresnobee.com, Wed., Feb. 11, 2009

Fairly or unfairly, trucks are frequently characterized as "the bad guys" when it comes to pumping pollutants into the Valley's air.

But an English company says its all-electric trucks may start changing perceptions once they hit the road in America later this year.

Smith Electric Vehicles showed off its Edison cargo van (*right, Bee photo by Tim Sheehan*) Tuesday at a California Energy Commission workshop in Fresno. The workshop focused on a state plan to fund research and development of alternative fuels as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Among the incentives in the draft plan are incentives to help businesses offset the cost of bringing alternative-fuel vehicles -- including, perhaps, electric cars, vans and trucks -- into their fleets.

That's why Mark Aubry, Smith Electric's vice president of sales in North America, and the Edison van were on hand. Smith Electric plans to begin limited production of an American version of the van this summer, building about 150 vehicles on Ford's new Transit Connect van chassis.

The American version of the Transit Connect can carry a payload of about 1,600 pounds. The European van has a payload of about 2,600 pounds, but depending on what model one gets it can be designed to haul nearly two tons. It has its limitations -- particularly when it comes to how far its lithium-ion batteries can take it on a single charge. All-electric trucks aren't intended for long-haul, over-the-road use, but in an urban delivery setting, Aubry said, a driver without a lead foot can probably squeeze about 100 miles before returning to the garage for a four-hour charge.

In Europe, Smith also builds a bigger truck, the Newton, which can carry up to eight tons of cargo.

I got behind the wheel of the Edison for a short test drive, with Aubry riding shotgun. The lack of engine noise was a little disconcerting -- just a whine of the electric motor as I stepped on the gas. And smooth -- no lurch from a transmission shifting gears. Not bad, not bad at all.

Because it's completely electric, there are no tailpipe emissions -- no sooty smoke, no nitrogen oxides that create smog, no carbon dioxide contributing to global warming. And while the bulk of the electricity in California is generated at power plants that burn fossil fuels -- and thus produce pollutants -- the benefits of a plug-in electric vehicle outweigh the pollution from creating the electricity to charge it, said Peter Ward, program manager for the California Energy Commission's Alternative Fuels and Vehicle Technology Program.

Ward added that most users would plug their electric vehicles in for an overnight charge, when there is less overall demand for electricity. If a customer has off-peak billing for that electricity, it reduces the cost of charging the batteries.

Smith Electric plans to build about 500 vehicles a year, based on the manufacturing capacity of its battery supplier. Aubry said the sticker price of an electric vehicle is roughly double that of an equivalent conventional vehicle, due mostly to the high cost of batteries.

But as battery production ramps up, he said, "that cost will come down dramatically."

If the state and federal governments come through with incentives, that can help ease the price tag for going green, too.

Danville's Athenian School turns on new solar panels

By Eric Louie, San Ramon Valley Times

In the Tri-Valley Herald, Thursday, February 12, 2009

Officials at The Athenian School have given themselves the top grade for a new solar power system they say will save money and the environment.

The private school in Danville on Wednesday launched its new power system — a baseball field-sized array of panels shaped into the letter "A" on the school's hillside.

The 220-kilowatt system consists of 1,300 photo voltaic panels that cover 30,000 square feet, according to the school. It will provide half of the school's electricity needs. It was designed and installed by REC Solar and Mitsubishi Electric and financed through a power purchase agreement with Tioga Energy that the school expects will save about \$250,000, or 15 percent of annual energy costs, over 20 years.

The school said over the course of the 20-year agreement, the array will cut out the generation of nearly [12,800 pounds of smog-producing emissions and 66 million pounds of carbon dioxide](#).

Residents seek EPA statistics Express doubt over Kettleman City data

By REBECCA PLEVIN / Vida En El Valle

Vida en el Valle Wednesday, February 11th, 2009

KETTLEMAN CITY -- Guadalupe Alatorre, a 43-year resident of Kettleman City, has seen city residents dying of cancer and just in the past year, has seen four babies born with birth defects.

"Do you know what kind of pain we've been going through?" Alatorre asked during a meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency last Wednesday night.

Alatorre and about 110 other Kettleman City residents attended the meeting, which was held to discuss the EPA's plans to re-test the air, soil, and vegetation in the areas surrounding Kettleman Hills Facility.

The hazardous waste site is located about 3.5 miles southwest of Kettleman City, a small town of about 1,500 people, 93 percent of whom are Latino, according to the U.S. Census.

During the meeting, EPA officials explained that the agency would be requiring Chemical Waste Inc. to conduct expensive and extensive studies for about a year to determine if its Kettleman Hills site is releasing PCB congeners into the environment and, if so, whether the amount of chemicals released could have an unhealthy impact on the people and the environment.

The EPA is requiring Chem Waste to undergo these tests before it considers approving the facility's request to renew its existing permit to operate a landfill.

To many residents, though, it's obvious that there are dangerous chemicals lurking in the environment around the community. As proof, residents told the EPA officials about babies being born to Kettleman City families with cleft palates.

Patrick Wilson, EPA senior regional toxicologist, responded to the community's concerns about birth defects by explaining that doctors are required by law to report every baby born with a birth defect.

"This idea of birth defects," Wilson said, "is something the state takes very seriously."

From 1998-2005, there were about three babies born with birth defects in Kettleman City for every 1,000 live births, according to King's County health data.

That compares with about 14 for every 1,000 births in Kings County, and about 12 for every 1,000 births in the Central Valley, Wilson said.

"There's only a thousand of us here," called out one woman, after hearing the statistics. "Do you want your child to be one of them?" called out another person.

"These are the numbers," Wilson said.

Community members then started listing off the families who recently had babies born with birth defects. "One of them is my nephew!" someone said, and another person pointed and said, "and one is his niece."

"Our heart goes out to all those families," said Luis-García Bakarich, EPA community involvement coordinator. He said he did not want to argue about how many babies have been born with defects but rather, the EPA was "trying to pursue information."

"All you have to do is come talk to the people," said Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction, an organization that is supporting Kettleman City's efforts. "They can introduce you to the families."

"We need a health survey and it needs to be done as soon as possible," Alatorre said.

Wilson explained that the new tests will allow the agency to measure in "exquisite" detail the amount and type of chemicals being released into the environment surrounding Kettleman City, and will be more effective than a health survey.

He said the EPA does not normally use so extensive of a test to determine if a facility should receive a permit to continue operations, but EPA officials decided this test was necessary after hearing the community's public comments regarding the facility.

"The fact that the community stakeholders took an interest, particularly in the process, and provided meaningful scientific input really allowed us to push forward," and request more sensitive testing, Wilson said in a phone interview Friday.

After the meeting, Miguel Alatorre, 14, said he was glad to hear that the EPA would be requiring Kettleman Hills to undergo more extensive tests, but he said he was concerned because Chem Waste would be responsible for conducting the tests.

The EPA will be collecting split samples to ensure that the data collection and analyzation are done appropriately, according to Wilson.

"The victory will be when we stop them from giving that permit to Chem Waste," Alatorre said.

Rio Bravo Ranch OK'd by city; Sierra Club likely to sue

Sierra Club expected to sue over environmental impact

BY JAMES GELUSO, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009

The Bakersfield City Council on Wednesday approved a large northeast development that was praised as an asset for the community.

But now, the planned Rio Bravo Ranch needs to get past the Sierra Club.

The local chapter of the environmental group will "almost certainly" sue, attempting to force the city and developer to adopt more measures to fight global climate change.

The 4,688-home development, spread across three square miles straddling Highway 178, could have included an additional 400 homes, noted Stan Grady, the city's development services director.

Jamie Nickel, whose family owns the land, said his grandfather bought the land in 1965 and always intended to develop it.

City Councilman Ken Weir, whose ward will include the project after it's annexed by the city, said the Nickels have the right attitude toward development.

"You can see and understand and hear in their voice, their concern for this property," he said. "It's going to be an asset to the community. It's going to be developed the right way, over time."

Gordon Nipp, vice chairman of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club, didn't speak at the meeting, but said after the council voted to approve the project that the organization will consider suing. The club repeated its objections in letters submitted to the city Tuesday.

"This project exceeds all of the thresholds being talked about in the state," Nipp said in an interview Tuesday. "It's just incredible that they're saying there's no significant impact."

But the project will meet those thresholds, contended Mary Jane Wilson, president of WZI, the consulting firm that prepared [the air-quality study](#) for the project. Half the homes in the project will be built after 2020, which will make them subject to a state "net zero" requirement, she said.

That means they'll be required to put energy into the grid through some method.

In other business, the council:

Approved a zone change for the section of Central Park slated to become the federal courthouse. In doing so, the council turned back an appeal by Edwin Wilson, who owns property downtown that could have been a courthouse site but was rejected by the federal government.

Approved spending \$260,000 on a consultant who will core pavement samples so that the city can qualify for federal stimulus money for pavement rehabilitation.

Delayed, for two weeks, consideration of a zone change to allow development on the northeast corner of Rosedale Highway and Jenkins Road. Councilman David Couch asked for the delay so he could meet with the property owner.

Approved the purchase, with state grant money, of a \$1.5 million recyclables processor.

-- *Staff writer Stacey Shepard contributed to this report.*

Antelope Valley transit fined \$17,500 for emission, record-keeping violations

Daily News Wire Services

L.A. Daily News, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2009

LANCASTER - The state Air Resources Board fined the Antelope Valley Transit Authority \$17,500 for record-keeping and emission violations, the board announced today.

An audit of the AVTA caught the agency out of compliance with testing and record-keeping standards, and also found a handful of vehicles that did not meet state air quality standards, according to the ARB.

"Compliance with emissions record-keeping and state smoke emissions is a key component in cleaning up the air in California," said board Chairwoman Mary Nichols. "Transit agencies serve a large number of people who ride in the bus every day that are negatively affected by these harmful emissions."

AVTA Facilities/Fleet Manager Dennis Willis said the testing of some of the agency's buses had "just slipped through the cracks" due to staff turnover at Veolia, the agency contracted by the AVTA to operate its testing equipment.

Veolia duly paid the portion of the fine incurred by the error, he said.

The emissions fine, he said, arose from four older buses, the retirement of which had been delayed several months due to funding issues. Those buses have since been retired, Willis said.

Willis characterized the ARB's fines as excessive and nitpicking.

"They're just out to grab every dime they can get," Willis said. "They're hurting like everyone else."

Mary Fricke, spokeswoman for the ARB, disputed the idea.

"We're doing the same job we've always been doing," Fricke said.

Of the \$17,500 paid to the ARB, \$13,125 went to the California Air Pollution Fund to pay for projects and research to improve the state's air quality, \$2,187.50 went to the Peralta Community College District for emissions education classes, and the remaining \$2,187.50 went to the California Pollution Control Financing Authority for low-interest loans for the owners of off-road diesel-powered construction vehicles, the ARB reported.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Thursday, Feb, 12, 2009:](#)

No thanks to Boxer

I read Sen. Barbara Boxer's commentary Jan. 30. She boasts of the federal government, with her help, "partnering" with agriculture here in the Valley. Farmers will get "nearly \$11 million" which will be directed to help farmers reduce the smog, soot and other farm-related air pollutants. Then she lectures us for 10 paragraphs about air pollution in agriculture.

I would like to remind Sen. Boxer that it is the federal government, in the first place, that keeps tightening up the threshold levels which declare these emissions to be "air pollutants." Every time we reach or get close to compliance, it is time to tighten the screws some more.

And we are to be thankful that agriculture will get \$11 million? That is not even a drop in the bucket of what it will cost agriculture to meet these new thresholds.

As a taxpayer, I am not moved by the token amount being offered. Perhaps Sen. Boxer could do more to clear our air by ending her weekly flights home in a fuel-guzzling aircraft.

I look forward to the end of her term in office. It will be time for some of that change we can all believe in.

Jon Alsdorf, Fresno

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses mega solar energy project is announced. California Southern Edison and BrightSource Energy announced that they will create in California the largest solar energy project in the world. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Anuncian megaproyecto de energía solar

Es un plan de siete fases para generar electricidad en el Sur de California

Róger Lindo

La Opinión, Thursday, February 12, 2009

Southern California Edison (SCE) y la empresa BrightSource Energy anunciaron ayer un acuerdo que permitirá crear el proyecto de energía solar más grande del mundo en California.

El plan consta de siete fases —la primera a ser completada en 2013— y producirá 1,300 megavatios, un potencial capaz de proveer electricidad para 845,000 hogares.

Según Stuart Hemphill, vicepresidente de SCE al frente de proyectos de energía alternativa y renovable, el complejo de siete plantas creará 1,400 empleos durante la primera fase del proyecto, y 3,500 de carácter permanente durante los 40 años que cubre el acuerdo.

Se espera que el plan solar arranque a finales de 2009, una vez que la Comisión de Servicios Públicos de California (PUC) dé el visto bueno, y después que la primera parte del proyecto, una planta con capacidad de 100 megavatios que se planea construir en Ivanpah, en el desierto de Mojave, empiece a operar. Se espera que esta instalación comience a funcionar en 2013.

Ivanpah es considerada óptima por contar con luz solar confiable de 330 a 350 días al año, una consideración esencial en este tipo de proyecto. Otro criterio para seleccionar los terrenos es que las plantas deben estar ubicadas en las cercanías de líneas de transmisión que ya sirven a centros grandes de población.

De acuerdo con BrightSource, las siete plantas producirán un total de 3,700 millones de kilovatios/hora de energía limpia, lo que ahorrará al medio ambiente más de dos millones al año en emisiones de dióxido de carbono, el principal responsable del calentamiento global.

Según los técnicos, el efecto de eliminar ese volumen de contaminantes equivaldría a sacar de circulación 335,000 vehículos.

La tecnología que será empleada en estas plantas, Luz Power Tower 550 (LPT 550), consiste en un sistema de miles de pequeños espejos llamados heliostatos. Éstos se encargan de concentrar la luz del sol en una caldera, que al ser calentada produce un vapor de alta temperatura. Éste se hace circular por medio de tuberías en una turbina, generando electricidad.

Con el fin de conservar el agua, un elemento escaso en las áreas desérticas donde operarán las plantas, el LPT 550 utiliza el aire ambiental para enfriar el vapor, que es obligado a regresar a la caldera para reiniciar el ciclo.

Tom Doyle, vicepresidente a cargo de proyectos de BrightSource Energy explicó ayer que la tecnología empleada en ese sistema sintetiza tres décadas continuas de trabajo en el campo de la generación de energía termosolar.

La compañía que construirá las plantas calcula que necesitará aproximadamente 10,500 acres de tierra para desarrollarlo, considerando que este tipo de proyectos necesita utilizar mucho espacio para desplegar los espejos que captan la luz solar.

SCE es una filial de Edison International. Sirve a una población de más de 13 millones por medio de casi cinco millones de cuentas de servicio eléctrico. Su área de operaciones cubre las regiones costera, central y sur de California.

La firma se precia de haberse puesto a la cabeza en la lista de compañías de servicio eléctrico que más adquieren energía solar para sus redes de distribución.