

Air pollution

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SC County Smog-Free, State Experts Maintain

Smog in Santa Cruz County?

Yes, there has been some.

But compared to Los Angeles, state experts say we can breathe free.

In short, Monterey County and a "considerable portion" of Santa Cruz County is pretty much pollution-free, a two-year report by the State Bureau of Air Sanitation says.

The report was presented to the Monterey-Santa Cruz Air Pollution Control Board on Monday.

The City of Santa Cruz had two smoggy days in two years, the report shows. The worst was August 17, 1968, just before the state moved its air pollution monitoring equipment out of the city.

Smoggy oxidants reached a level of .2 per million parts of air (ppm) on that day, which is above the .15 "adverse level" set by the state.

In other words, it bothered some people with eye irritation, or had a smell.

Up at Loma Prieta, near the county line, there were four such smoggy days, with the peak on September 25, 1968 at .25 ppm.

The smog probably was coming from the Santa Clara valley or from San Francisco on all six days, state officials said.

Monterey had only one smoggy day, so far, since measurements started there in 1968.

By comparison, Los Angeles has 200 days a year when oxidants are above the "adverse" level. When the level reaches .5 ppm, a "smog alert" is called in Los Angeles.

Damage to some pine trees was found in Santa Cruz County along the coast, and in the gap on the Highway 17 mountain area going into Santa Clara valley. No damage was found in Monterey County.

Whatever pollution there is in Santa Cruz County comes mostly from automobiles, the state says. Other sources of pollution are being cut back by regulation.

In Monterey County, PG&E accounts for 90 per cent of the air pollution, and automobiles only 10 per cent.

Oddly, the state said that new air pollution devices on cars cut down on such pollutants as hydrocarbons, but add nitrogen oxides.

Pollution monitoring stations will continue to operate near New Brighton Beach, and in Monterey this year.

