

Air pollution 9/4/92

Locals pushed looser air pollution rules

By **TERESA JIMENEZ**
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SANTA CRUZ — A push by Santa Cruz County businesses for more lenient air quality regulation has proved successful so far, according to a local businessman.

State lawmakers passed a bill Sunday night that will change the amount of pollutants a large business can emit in the Monterey Bay area.

The change was made after local chambers of commerce, businesses and individuals lobbied legislators for the change, said Carl Blanke, a commercial real estate broker with Hirsch and Associates in Capitola.

Labeling air pollution in the Monterey Bay area as "serious" would hinder companies from setting up shop here, said Blanke, also a member of a committee that advises the Watsonville Economic Development Department.

"The new requirements are reasonable," Blanke said. "It will allow for new businesses. Anything can be mitigated, but there must be a cost/benefit ratio. We're not anti-environment."

The bill can still be vetoed by Gov. Pete Wilson within 30 days, Blanke said. If Wilson doesn't take action on it, the bill becomes law.

Abra Bennett of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District said, however, that "it looks to me like a done deal."

According to the Air Pollution Control District, under the Monterey Bay area's new label as an area with "moderate" pollution, 8.5 more tons of pollutants per day will be added to the air by the year

2000.

Only three companies — Pacific Gas & Electric Co., RMC Lonestar Co. Inc. and National Refractories — will be required to limit the amount of pollutants being emitted to the best level possible under the new legislation, Bennett said.

"What the bill does is it creates a system where you ignore violations," Bennett said. "We get air violations for free. It may be good from the business perspective, but from the air quality perspective,

it's a bad thing."

Memory Woodard, executive director of the Scotts Valley Chamber of Commerce, agreed with Blanke and said the amendment to the Clean Air Act restores the original intent to improve air quality.

"We feel it is a very good compromise," Woodard said. "It creates a balance that allows the local air quality agency to develop a plan based on the seriousness of air pollution rather than worst-case scenario."

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