

## Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

With wildfire season in full swing across California, agricultural employers should be aware of an emergency regulation that took effect during the summer, requiring them to protect their employees from exposure to smoke and ash.

Adopted by the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board, the emergency rule took effect July 29 and will be in place until Jan. 18, 2020, giving the state time to

develop a permanent regulation through the standard rulemaking process. It targets worker exposure to fine particulates in wildfire smoke, known as PM2.5 because of their size – 2.5 microns in diameter or smaller. These fine particulates can lodge deep in the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing a variety of adverse health effects from persistent coughing and asthma to bronchitis, heart failure and early death.

When worker exposure to wildfire smoke appears possible, the emergency regulation requires agricultural employers to monitor air quality at every work-site before the start of each shift and periodically thereafter. They can do this either by directly testing the air themselves for the presence of PM2.5, or by checking the Air Quality Index information posted online, such as on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s AirNow website (<https://airnow.gov/state/CA/index.cfm>).

Whenever the AQI exceeds 150 – the level the EPA deems “unhealthy” for everyone – the employer is required to provide respirators, such as N95 masks, for voluntary use by

all affected employees. At levels above 500, respirator use is mandatory. Other methods can also be implemented to reduce worker exposure, such as moving them to a different site with better air quality, reducing the length of the shift, or providing more and longer rest breaks.

Among other provisions, the law also requires that employers develop a system for communicating with their employees about air quality conditions and what

protective measures are available. They’re also required to train workers about proper use of respirators and other safety precautions.

The full text of the regulation is available online at [www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/Protection-from-Wildfire-Smoke-Emergency.html](http://www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/Protection-from-Wildfire-Smoke-Emergency.html).

It became clear during the Thomas Fire in December 2017 that air quality can change abruptly and unpredictably during a wildfire, depending on wind behavior and other factors. It also became clear that there was no real system in place for identifying and mitigating risks to agricultural workers in our fields and orchards. This led to chaos, confusion and controversy, as health officials issued conflicting advisories and activist groups launched impromptu mask distribution efforts (sometimes involving trespassing) that generated accusatory headlines and social media posts.

This situation must be addressed, particularly given the likelihood that more frequent and more intense wildfires are the new normal for California. The new regulation adds urgency to that mandate. Every agricultural employer must stockpile masks, or identify a source that can be tapped on short notice, and incorporate wildfire risk mitigation into company communication and training programs. That’s always been a good idea, but as of July 29 it’s also the law.

### Speaking of fire season ...

As I was putting this newsletter together, two wildfires broke out in Ventura County – the Easy fire, which ignited Oct. 30 in Simi Valley, and the Maria fire, which broke out the following evening at the summit of South Mountain near Santa Paula.

The Easy fire threatened the Reagan Library and menaced homes and farms in the Tierra Rejada Valley (guess which drew the most media attention), before being contained. There was little agricultural damage, although Underwood Family Farms was forced to shut down its harvest festival and evacuate employees, visitors and a menagerie of animals.

The Maria fire was another story. Although it did little damage on the north, west and east flanks of the mountain, the fire scorched avocado and citrus orchards in the Las Posas Valley as it moved down the southern slopes. Damage was scattered, and while it was not

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**[A new emergency regulation] ... targets worker exposure to fine particulates in wildfire smoke, [that] can lodge deep in the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing a variety of adverse health effects.**

### What’s Inside?

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- Member Benefits: Tickets & Discounts

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# 4-H inspires kids to do more

By Valerie Zeko

When you hear “4-H” you might think of youth wearing white uniforms and green hats, raising large livestock such as steers or sheep and taking them to the local county fair to compete. Yes, 4-H youth do raise livestock and take them to the fair, but today’s 4-H youth do much more, such as attending state leadership conferences, learning coding concepts at National Science Night, and participating in speech and interview contests at county and state Presentation Days. They may also learn to make a podcast, manage money, or develop leadership skills.

Here in Ventura County, we have more than 500 youth participating in 14 unique community clubs offering projects from Overnight Camping to Rabbits to Baking and Cake Decorating. Virtually every member of Piru Canyon 4-H raises swine in their Swine Project, and Citrus Valley 4-H members (4-H’ers for short) can learn to surf in their Surfing Project. The projects offered depend on what the adult volunteers choose to lead.

Clubs have monthly meetings where they stand up and say the 4-H pledge: “I pledge my HEAD to clearer thinking, my HEART to

greater loyalty, my HANDS to larger service, and my HEALTH to better living.” 4-H members from all over the county can come together for county 4-H events, including Fashion Revue, Food Faire, Presentation Day and Animal Field Day.

Because 4-H is now defined as any youth education the UC offers, more youth are participating in 4-H than ever before. For example, here in Ventura County, the UC Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) is lucky to have one of the state’s nine Research and Extension Centers (REC), the Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center (HAREC) in Santa Paula at the historic Faulkner Farm property. Thousands of schoolchildren become 4-H’ers for a day when they visit the HAREC with their classes to learn about pollination, plant parts, and where their food comes during presentations by trained 4-H and Master Gardener volunteers.

Our 4-H Student Farm allows middle schoolers to become 4-H’ers every Friday after school when they come to the HAREC to learn basic agricultural practices from soil health and laying irrigation to planting,

harvesting and cooking. Every summer, more than 40 youth become 4-H’ers for a week when they attend our 4-H “Sustainable You!” Camp, where they bake brownies in a solar oven, ride the stationary smoothie bike to make smoothies, and learn about actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint on our planet.

Most people don’t know that every military installation in the U.S. is required to have a 4-H program, so when the youth step into one of the three youth centers at Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), they become 4-H’ers.

Nowadays, 4-H’ers rarely wear their “whites,” so you may not recognize them. However, if you meet a kid who seems confident, talks positively about 4-H, and gets along well with adults, you may have met a 4-H’er! Say hello and ask them about their experience with 4-H! They will be happy to tell you.

— Valerie Zeko is 4-H Program Representative for UC Cooperative Extension in Ventura. Contact her at (805) 525-9293, Ext. 1204, or at [vjzeko@ucanr.edu](mailto:vjzeko@ucanr.edu).

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significant as during the Thomas Fire, individual ranches took some hits. Two homes also burned.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the incident was the role Southern California Edison’s public safety power shutoff played in worsening the impact of the Maria fire. One of the hardest hit ranches lost about 35 acres of avocados and citrus, and had been without power for 48 hours before the fire broke out. This meant that workers were unable to irrigate the orchard in advance, as they typically would have during a red-flag event, moistening the mulch on the ground and making it much less flammable.

Without power, they also could not fill their reservoirs or water trucks, because all the wells and booster pumps were inoperable. And this meant they couldn’t even provide water to the firefighters on scene, who were asking for it. Thanks to Edison, in other words, a fire the company’s power shutoff

failed to prevent likely did more damage than it would have if the utility had left the power on – a maddeningly perverse outcome.

### New officers elected

At its September meeting, The FBVC Board of Directors elected a new slate of officers. They are Will Terry, president; Ted Grether, first vice president; Chris Sayer, second vice president; Jason Cole, secretary; and Will Pidduck, treasurer. The board also gave its sincere thanks to Danny Pereira for his service as president from 2017 to 2019. Fortunately for us, Danny remains on the board, continuing to lend his experience and expertise to the organization.

### FBVC wins recognition

Farm Bureau of Ventura County will be honored at this year’s California Farm Bureau Federation meeting with Activities of Excellence awards for its Membership, Policy Implementation, Leadership, Ag Education and Public Relations programs. The awards program is intended to recognize

county Farm Bureaus for their efforts at the local level to provide industry leadership and advocacy, public education and outreach, and to strengthen the organization through membership and board development.

All Farm Bureau members are welcome to attend the annual meeting, being held Dec. 8-11 in Monterey. For more information, go to [www.cfbf.com/am2019](http://www.cfbf.com/am2019).

### Pesticide war heats up in Ojai

Commercial citrus orchards played a key role in protecting Ojai from annihilation during the Thomas Fire in 2017, providing a moist green buffer around the town as flames roared across all the surrounding hillsides. Now, however, some residents are taking to social media, organizing mass gatherings and occasionally trespassing in those same orchards to harass farm owners and employees.

The reason? A small group of activists organized a well-attended town hall meeting on Sept. 28 to kick off a multimedia misinformation campaign (continued on page 3)

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intended to persuade the public that growers in the Ojai Valley are poisoning their neighbors with pesticides.

The event itself was a fact-free festival of farmer bashing that featured a parade of falsehoods, half-truths, unsubstantiated allegations and unverifiable anecdotes – residents blaming their cancer or various other illnesses on orchard spraying, claiming that helicopters had doused their homes and yards with chemicals, or that pesticides are unnecessary because compost protects trees against pests and disease.

There was no evidence presented that anyone claiming to have been directly exposed to pesticides had reported that exposure to the county agricultural commissioner, who is legally required to investigate such reports to determine whether a serious violation of state and federal law has occurred. There was no evidence that anyone had sought medical attention for their alleged “exposure” symptoms and could provide toxicology reports identifying the chemical involved. There was no evidence that anyone swabbed down their patio furniture and submitted samples to a lab to determine whether drifting spray had, in fact, contaminated their back yard as claimed.

The centerpiece of the town hall was a short “documentary” produced by a pair of independent filmmakers, Josh and Rebecca Tickell, who bought property in Ojai with a house and a barn and five acres of avocados, moved there from the Los Angeles County community of Venice five years ago, and now apparently believe they know more about farming than the commercial growers whose families have been making a living that way in the Ojai Valley for generations. Or at least that’s what you’d believe from the noise they’ve been raising in the small community. It’s not much of an exaggeration to say the Tickells’ film portrayed the Ojai Valley as the most toxic farming environment in California. For a sample of the overheated rhetoric, visit their website: [www.regenerateojai.com](http://www.regenerateojai.com).

During interviews after the event, they claimed to have been motivated to launch a campaign to end pesticide use in the Ojai Valley by an incident in which a helicopter

making an aerial application doused their house, causing them to suffer severe allergic reactions.

To call this unlikely would be charitable, and the Tickells provided no evidence that it actually occurred. But that’s what makes the controversy so frustrating: It’s a battle of facts and logic against an emotion-driven belief in the evils of conventional agriculture, and the magical cure-all power of healthy soil, that borders on cultish.

It’s tempting to regard this as just another Ojai-being-Ojai moment, but this time the anti-science minority in town has a very loud megaphone, courtesy of the social media-savvy Tickells, and their need to stir up publicity for their new documentary about agriculture, trailers for which they screened at the pesticide town hall.

One result of all this hysteria is that the Ojai City Council is considering asking the Board of Supervisors direct the agricultural commissioner to require some kind of advance notice to Ojai residents every time a farmer within a half-mile of town plans to apply pesticides. We pushed back strongly against this proposal when it appeared on the council’s Oct. 8 agenda, and the item was tabled and sent it back to staff for revision.

The proposal is expected to come back to the council in some form in November, however, and if the request actually does end up before the Board of Supervisors, we will alert the ag community to mobilize opposition. State law already establishes requirements for public notification targeting schools, day care centers and other sensitive sites; it would set a terrible precedent if public pressure could force imposition of additional local regulations based on unfounded allegations rather than science.

— *John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at [john@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:john@farmbureauvc.com).*



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## Member Benefits

### TICKETS & DISCOUNTS

*Farm Bureau members qualify for savings on admission to many of Southern California's most popular theme parks and other attractions. To place an order or request a complete list of discounts, you may call our office at 805-289-0155 or send an email to [Cheri@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:Cheri@farmbureauvc.com). Please have your membership number available.*

**Aquarium of the Pacific** — Long Beach; One Day Ticket. Adult (12 yrs+) \$19.00 (save \$15.95); Child (3-11 yrs) \$16.00 (save \$8.95). Valid thru 11/30/19.

**Cinemark Century & Rave Theatres** — All Cinemark, Century & Rave locations. Platinum Super Saver Ticket, valid any regular movie anytime. Regular price up to \$12, you pay \$10. Additional premiums may apply for specially priced films and/or events priced higher than normal box office. No expiration. Physical tickets only.

**Dinner Detective Murder Mystery** — Ventura County/Thousand Oaks; Adult (13 years+) Dinner & Show \$58.95. Save up to \$12.50 with tax/gratuity. No expiration dates. E-Tickets only.

**Knott's Berry Farm** — Buena Park; General One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$49.50 (save \$34.50). Valid thru 1/5/20. One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$46.95 (save \$37.05) Mon-Thurs Only. Valid thru 1/5/20.

**Legoland California Resort** — Carlsbad; Valid thru 12/31/19. E Tickets Only. Resort Hopper – Includes 1 Day at Legoland, Including Seasonal Waterpark\* and Sea Life Aquarium, and Free 2nd Day. \$79.95 (3 Yrs+) Save \$46.05. Both visits must occur by 12/31/19. Water Park requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open seasonally between March & October. 1-Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$74.95 (save \$25.05).

**Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament** — Buena Park; Reservations Required. Dinner and Show. Adult \$45.75 (save \$22 w/tax). Child (12 yrs & under) \$34.50 (save \$7.20 w/tax). “BOGO Birthday Special” during your Birthday month. Valid thru 12/30/19.

**Pacific Park** — Santa Monica Pier; 1-Day Unlimited Ride Wristband Voucher \$22.95 (save \$10 per person over 7 years). Valid thru 12/31/19.

**Regal Entertainment Group** — All Edwards and Regal locations. Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.75. (Surcharge for IMAX, RPX, 3-D films & 4DX films, premium or Luxury Seating locations or select theaters.). Ultimate Movie Pack-2 Premiere Unrestricted Ticket & \$10 Gift Card \$29.50. No expiration dates on physical tickets. Physical tickets only.

**San Diego Safari Park** — Escondido; Adult (12 yrs+) \$47.00 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$39.00 (save \$7). Valid thru 5/25/20. E-Tickets Only.

**San Diego Sea World** — San Diego; E-Tickets Only. Single Day Tickets: Adult (10 yrs+) \$66.40 (save \$25.59); Child (3-9 yrs) \$66.40 (save \$20.59). 2019-20 Fun Card: Adult \$86.95 (save \$7.04) or Child \$81.95 (save \$7.04) Unlimited visits thru 12/31/20. E-Tickets Only.

**San Diego Zoo** — San Diego; E-ticket 1. Day Pass Adult (12 yrs+) \$47 (save \$9); 1 Day Pass Child (3-11 yrs) \$39 (save \$7). Valid thru 05/25/20. E-Tickets Only.

**See's Candies** — One Pound Candy Gift Certificate & gift envelope \$18.50 (save \$2.50). No Expiration Date. Physical Tickets Only.

**Six Flags Magic Mountain** — Valencia; General Admission (3yrs+) \$63.95 (save \$29.04). Valid 1 operating day thru 9/13/20.

**Universal Studios Hollywood** — Universal City; E-tickets only. Season Pass (3yrs+) \$134 (save \$25). Unlimited visits thru 1/31/20. Valid 9 months after your first visit. View blackout dates apply after 1st visit.

# FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

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### MISSION STATEMENT

We represent the broad and dynamic interests of the agricultural industry through our diverse membership. We serve members by delivering services, promoting policies, developing coalitions, and fostering community action that will ensure the long-term success of agriculture in Ventura County.

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