

**Evelina Ochoa**

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August 17, 2007 05:50 PM

Chair, CA Air Resources Board Nichols Mary D.  
1001 "T" Street  
P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812

Subject: Take action to protect farm workers in the nation's smoggiest town

Dear Chair, CA Air Resources Board Mary D.,

I'm horrified to hear about the initial decision the California Air Resource Board made in June. Despite numerous health hazards, you chose to back the valley's air-quality board decision to extend the region's deadline to meet federal ozone standard by 11 years. This only puts people in danger by exposing them to a toxic environment for another decade. I stand with the United Farm Workers and The Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment in demanding immediate change instead of pushing deadlines to 2024.

The small farm-worker town of Arvin lies in a rich agricultural area filled with vineyards and orange groves. It has the dubious distinction of being the town with the most polluted air in America. Arvin doesn't have factories or congested freeways like cities such as Los Angeles. It produces little pollution. However pollutants blow in from as far away as San Francisco and residents--most of them farm workers--are paying the price. They complain the air smells toxic. Everyone is put at risk--especially children. The situation is so bad that some parents are afraid to let their children play outside.

Doctors and public officials say asthma and other respiratory problems are common. Residents also complain of watery eyes, dry throats and inexplicable coughs, particularly in the summer. when temperatures can climb over 100 degrees and stay there for days.

According to an Associated Press story that came out last weekend, Arvin's level of ozone, the primary component in smog, exceeded the amount considered acceptable by the EPA on an average of 73 days per year between 2004 and 2006. The San Francisco Bay Area averaged just 4 days over the same period.

This is just not true. An independent report "Clearing the Air" by the International Sustainable Systems Research Center (ISSRC) found that with stricter regulations 95% of the Valley can reach compliance for ozone standards by 2013 and the remaining parts of the valley can be in compliance much sooner than 2024. An example of a needed change includes implementing regulations on mobile agricultural equipment--which is exempted in the current plan?even

though it is one of the largest sources of local pollution. There is no need to extend deadlines until 2024 and put residents' health at risk for an extra decade! California knows extending the deadline to 2024 is the wrong decision.

Gov. Schwarzenegger criticized the move when the California Air Resources Board to approve the local board's extension last June. He then fired the board's chairman a few days later.

You will be meeting in September to approve the entire state plan. At this time please overrule this previous dangerous decision and force compliance by an earlier date. There is not need to put people in danger by exposing them to a toxic environment for another decade.

Sincerely,  
Evelina Ochoa