

Full index



News
Children's book winners — A4

Editorial sections

Business Herald	C1-7
Cryptic crossword	B4
Daily crossword	B6
Sudoku puzzles	A7, B4
Editorial	A10
Horoscopes	B4
Letters, cartoon	A10
Sideswipe	A14
Sport and racing	C12, C14-16
The Guide	B4-6
Travel	D1-8
TV listings	B6
Weather	C15
World	B1-3



World of Football
Farewell Fabien — C15

Births, deaths C8

Advertising sections

FULL CLASSIFIED INDEX	C9
Businesses for sale/wtd	C7
Cars for sale	C8-10
Cinema times	B5
Flatmates	C11-12
Flats, houses to let	C11
General situations vacant	C10-11
Houses, land for sale/wtd	C7
Job training	C10
Property investments	C7
To let/lease	C7

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Drivers target of smog rules

Measures to reduce air pollution focus on cars and domestic fires, but industry escapes reduction target

by Anne Beston
environment reporter

Auckland's big industries are off the hook when it comes to cutting air pollution but car owners are about to feel the pinch at the testing station.

Domestic fire users will also share the burden of cleaning up the region's air.

Moves to clean up our air are taking on a new urgency as a 2013 Ministry for the Environment deadline looms. That's when new clean-air targets come into force and, if they are not met, new factories or businesses that produce air pollution won't get permits.

It is Auckland Regional Council's job to ensure Auckland meets its goals, including reducing fine particles in the air, or PM10, by more than half.

Fine particle limits are regularly breached in Auckland. PM10 is blamed for aggravating existing health problems such as asthma and causing premature death.

Industry contributes just 8 per cent of PM10 with vehicles and home fires producing 51 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

Yesterday the ARC's environment committee voted to give industry a reduction target of zero, instead opting for an emissions cap, which has yet to be set.

"We could wipe out whole industries and still not meet the target," said ARC scientist Dr Gerda Kuschel.

Industry contribution will instead fall on motorists and domestic fire users who will each have to cut emissions by 58 per cent.

Car owners will be the first to bite the bullet when they visit the testing station. From October 27 cars will be put through visible smoke tests.

While the worst smoky vehicles are thought to number around 60,000, or 2 per cent of the country's three million-strong fleet, the test is relatively objective and the number of cars that fail could be a lot higher.



EXHAUST NASTIES

- Fine air particles, or PM10 (linked to bronchial conditions, asthma).
- Carbon dioxide (greenhouse gas).
- Nitrogen dioxide (linked to asthma).
- Carbon monoxide (linked to heart attacks).
- Sulphur dioxide (greenhouse gas).
- Benzene and hydrocarbons (linked to cancer and damage to nervous system).

What is PM10?

- Tiny particles suspended in liquid or gas that can lodge in bronchial pathways and lungs. Exacerbate asthma and bronchitis; can cause premature death.

New warrant check

- From October 27 all vehicles will have a visible smoke test — once while idling and again when revved for five seconds. If visible smoke is apparent, the car will fail. Then it's off to the mechanic for a tune-up or more, depending on why the vehicle is smoking.

SMOKING GUN: Tougher emission testing begins on October 27.
PICTURE / BRETT PHIBBS

Police already issue tickets for smoky vehicles. Infringements issued between 2001 and last year were around 300 a year, according to the Ministry of Transport, although police maintain the figure was higher.

The ARC is desperate to avoid not making the August 2013 deadline, when all new permits for air discharges by industry must be declined

if reductions haven't been achieved. That would not only be contentious but economically risky.

"The overall total looks scary but if you bite it off in chunks then it should be achievable," Dr Kuschel said.

To do nothing would mean a 35 per cent shortfall, she said.

ARC wants to help every sector reduce air pollution but is frustrated

central Government is not doing enough.

It has lobbied hard for more punitive steps including new emission standards for Japanese imported cars so they meet the emission standards they were manufactured to after being imported here.

ARC is also working with the Ministry of Transport on "breathalysing"

cars by remote sensor to identify potential smoky vehicles. The sensor would detect "gross emitters", the car would be identified and the owner required to get the vehicle off the road until it met an emissions test.

More announcements on emissions are expected from Climate Change Minister David Parker within the next couple of weeks.

Family challenge to Transpower on lines upgrade

Health and property values cited in bid to block work on boosting transmissions

by Jarrod Booker
South Island correspondent

Transpower's right to go on to private land and upgrade its transmission lines is being tested in court by a South Canterbury farming family which says it is worried about the value of its property.

The Environment Court case taken by the Hale family began yesterday and will be closely watched by farmers throughout the country.

Within the past week 60 Waikato farmers and 50 Auckland farmers have resolved to deny the national electricity grid operator access so it can do work needed to increase the power-carrying capacity between South Waikato and Auckland.

The Hales, operating as Fernside Dairies Ltd, say Transpower has no automatic right to go on to their dairy farm 20km southwest of Timaru to upgrade the high voltage lines running along about 2.7km of their land.

They are seeking a judgment that Transpower's plan to double the number of conductor wires from three to six and double the capacity for carrying electricity will have an "injurious affection" on their land value and farming operations. This could open the way for a compensation claim.

Transpower says the upgrade is needed to meet growing demand for electricity in Christchurch and the top of the South Island.

In a statement to the court, Fernside Dairies director Gareth Hale said he had no objection to the line upgrade.

"I appreciate that Fernwood, like every other farming business in the

country, needs a reliable source of electricity," Mr Hale said.

But the company needed to know where it stood in terms of what it could do on its property and the limits of Transpower's rights.

The family had tried to negotiate with Transpower over an easement around the lines and towers, but it conflicted with plans for a storage dam and irrigation costing up to \$3.5 million.

"The offer of \$30,000 that was made for an easement did not... adequately address seriousness of the problems caused by the upgrade that were posed in this case," Mr Hale said.

Fernside lawyer Paul Cassin said

Mr Hale had concerns about the effect the upgraded lines would have on the health of his pregnant wife.

"There are also serious concerns as to the effect the upgrade and replacement proposal will have on the value of the property in the eyes of not only the theoretical, hypothetical prudent purchaser," Mr Hale said.

"This is not a test case as far as the Hale family is concerned. This is a matter of direct and immediate concern to them."

If given a judgment of injurious affection, the Hales would be prepared to renegotiate over an easement. Transpower is expected to present its case from today.

Drug company fined \$9000 for selling to internet suppliers

A pharmaceutical supplies company was fined \$9000 yesterday for sourcing medicines from overseas and selling them to buyers in Vanuatu for sale over the internet.

ITP Pharmaceutical Supplies (ITP) admitted six charges under the Medicines Act in a case brought by the Ministry of Health business unit Medsafe.

ITP was also ordered to pay costs of \$6000 and court costs of \$780 in the

Manukau District Court judgment.

Medsafe said ITP came to its attention after New Zealand Customs seized a consignment of medicines en route to Vanuatu.

After an investigation the ministry concluded that ITP was sourcing medicines from overseas companies in Germany, Turkey and England and then selling them to purchasers in Vanuatu, who then planned to sell

them over the internet.

The medicines involved were "new medicines" and had not been approved for sale in New Zealand by the Minister of Health, as required under the Medicines Act.

The ministry said the sale of medicines without this consent from New Zealand was an offence.

Medsafe's team leader of compliance, Derek Fitzgerald, welcomed

the guilty plea.

He said the Medicines Act was designed to protect public health and safety by ensuring consumers received medicines that were safe, effective and of acceptable quality.

ITP had agreed to no longer sell or distribute medicines, either in New Zealand or from New Zealand, unless those medicines had ministerial consent.

"If a medicine distributed within or from New Zealand does not have ministerial consent and has not been evaluated by Medsafe, there is no guarantee that the medicine is safe to use, or that the medicine actually contains what it says on the label," Mr Fitzgerald said.

Even though these medicines were unlikely to be sold to local consumers, Mr Fitzgerald said, New Zealand was a

responsible member of the international community and should act to deter residents from selling medicines to overseas purchasers if these sales breached the Medicines Act.

"It appears the medicines concerned in this case were destined for supply to consumers around the world via internet sale."

Medsafe considered this would be dangerous for consumers. — NZPA

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