

EPA Rules Could Hurt Area Rainfall

THE Environmental Protection Agency not only seems to be on the side of insects in humanity's battle for survival. EPA also may be lined up on the side of drouth, and against rain.

The EPA has banned so many useful insecticides on suspicion of being harmful to people that food producers are concerned about having adequate protection for their crops.

Now, in implementing the Clean Air Act of 1970, EPA "spokespersons" have declared that unless Oklahoma gets a state plan into effect and keeps it working, EPA plans to impose sanctions to force local governments to comply with its rules.

In attempting to enforce bureaucratic standards, EPA appears to be opposed to almost any vehicle with an exhaust pipe, ignoring Oklahoma winds. This could affect our rainfall.

One EPA spokesman implied that Oklahomans must make drastic reductions in both man-made air contamination and in "fugitive dust" which sometimes shows up in our

atmosphere.

Since the dust storms and "black blizzards" of the 1930s, Oklahoma farmers and ranchers have spent millions of dollars trying to grow cover crops to halt dust blowing and wind erosion.

Results have been excellent, but whether it is desirable to stop dust blowing entirely may be a lively question.

"If it weren't for the dust in the air, you'd never have a cloud," said Dr. Pierre Saint-Amand, weather modification expert from the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, Calif., in a seminar at Oklahoma City this month.

The reason is that moisture in the atmosphere must have nuclei upon which to collect if it is to condense or freeze so that clouds may form and rain may fall.

It is upon this principle that cloud seeding is based to increase rainfall or to suppress damaging hailstorms. Sometimes there aren't enough natural nuclei in the air to

collect moisture and generate rainfall. By providing artificial nuclei, such as silver iodide crystals or dry ice, man can stimulate rain.

EPA seems to overlook the fact that air pollution can and does increase rainfall in many places.

For centuries, military leaders have noted that unusual rainfall often follows major battles. Foresters have observed that rainstorms frequently occur when clouds move over forest fires which have projected debris into the atmosphere.

It has been found that rainfall may be heavier in areas adjacent to factory smokestacks than in surrounding territory.

Dr. Saint-Amand made another important point when he observed that as our underground water resources are used up, we must rely upon rainfall for our water. Oklahoma is rapidly and steadily depleting underground water supplies.

If EPA eliminates "fugitive dust" in its drive for clear air and pure water, will we get enough rain?