

Merced Sun Star
November 10, 2007

ATTACHMENT 2

TRANSPORTATION

Merced creates spot for truckers to park

Lot near airport can be used for rigs, but no sleepovers allowed.

By LESLIE ALBRECHT
lalbrecht@mercedsun-star.com

Big rigs can cause big headaches when they park on residential streets. Now the city is hoping to solve this 18-wheeled problem with a new parking lot designed specifically for trucks.

The lot will have 23 spaces where truckers can park their rigs free on a first-come, first-served basis. It's located on Riggs Avenue, just off West Avenue in the Airport Industrial Park.

Police Chief Russ Thomas said trucks parked in residential neighborhoods create a slew of problems. They anger neighbors, make streets unsafe by blocking drivers' views and take a toll on asphalt in hot weather.

If they have cargo in their trailers, they can become targets for thieves, Thomas added.

It's illegal for trucks to park on any residential street in Merced. Truckers who violate that law can earn themselves a \$30 ticket.

The city has seen a growing number of complaints about trucks on residential streets, said Assistant City Manager Bill Cahill.

The problem tends to move from one section of the city to

the other, with truckers seeking out new spots after the city posts No Parking signs.

The new lot is lighted, partially fenced and will be regularly patrolled by police. Truckers won't be allowed to sleep there overnight.

It also has some parking for cars, so truckers can drive to the lot and pick up their rig. The lot cost the city about \$25,000.

The new truckers' lot helps the city kill two birds with one slab. It's built atop a hazardous waste site that was capped with asphalt a few years ago to contain the site's contamination. "We had a significant piece of thick asphalt, so we decided that could become a good thing," said Assistant City Manager Bill Cahill.

Carlos Seijas of DATS Trucking, Inc. said the new lot could help independent truckers who don't have a terminal where they can park their rigs.

It could also help smooth out the sometimes contentious relationship between truckers and local law enforcement. "Everybody wants their freight but they don't want the truckers," said Seijas. "We're trying to provide a service, but a lot of people don't like us. If Save Mart didn't have their trucks, they wouldn't be able to give you groceries."

Reporter Leslie Albrecht can be reached at 209-385-2484 or lalbrecht@mercedsun-star.com.