

Long waits prompt some violence

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Worst lines of shortage 79,

By Ed Pope
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Gasoline lines, described by some dealers as the worst of the shortage, plagued Santa Clara County Tuesday, apparently in response to uncertainty over a threatened four-day closure of service stations this week.

Most service stations reported lines as long as or longer

than they were before odd-even rationing was imposed.

And police departments said the lines caused the worst traffic jams they have seen during the worsening gasoline crisis.

The Regal Arco station at Old Oakland and Gish roads reported a line 1½ miles long Tuesday morning — “the longest we’ve ever had.”

Manager Steve Malork said

he counted 365 cars in line at the peak. He said, “People are panicking again because of the proposed four-day shutdown” Thursday through Sunday.

Other station attendants agreed that that is part of the problem, but they also pointed out that Tuesday was the first real opportunity since last Friday for “odd” license plate owners to gas up.

Comments from dealers about Tuesday’s lines ranged from “odd-even hasn’t helped” to “the line today was the longest ever.” Waits of up to 2½ hours were reported. Several dealers said they had to close

Back of Section, Col. 1

Tuesday the pits at pumps

Continued from Page 1

their lines before they even began pumping.

This was true even though more stations apparently were open than have been in recent days. Some oil companies have been experiencing trouble in making deliveries and many stations have been closed for one to four days because they were out of gasoline.

Meanwhile, dealers report testiness is picking up on the lines.

"We average one good fight a day," said Brad Plumb, whose father operates a Shell station at Stevens Creek Boulevard and Wolfe Road.

Plumb said five men in a Ranchero pickup truck spit food on his father, Nat, and jumped out of their vehicle to attack him when he objected because they gassed up with an even license number on an odd day.

Plumb said they fled when he and three other employes armed with tire irons came to his father's defense.

"But that's not unusual," he added. "We have to physically put at least one driver back in his car every day and force him to get out of the line because he has the wrong license plate."

Ernie Sanchez, the Sunnyvale Exxon dealer who initiated an appointment system to dispense gas, said Tuesday he will end that practice on Thursday because he has been hassled so much by the public over that policy.