

**For immediate release 10-25-2020**

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**Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors**

## **Gusty winds causing blowing dust and continuing wildfire smoke prompt health caution**

### ***Potential elevated PM10 and PM2.5 pose health concern***

Gusty winds are causing localized blowing dust, which can result in elevated concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller (PM10). As a result, local air pollution officials are issuing a health cautionary statement effective today (10/25) through Monday (10/26) for San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, and Fresno Counties.

In addition, the SQF Complex Fire in Tulare County, Creek Fire in Madera/Fresno counties and other California wildfires continue to generate smoke, which contains particulate matter pollution (PM2.5). Smoke impacts are expected to continue until the fires are extinguished.

Exposure to particulate matter pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution. Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move indoors, to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. The common cloth and paper masks individuals are wearing due to COVID-19 concerns may not protect them from wildfire smoke.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley location by visiting [myRAAN.com](http://myRAAN.com). District air monitoring stations are designed to detect microscopic PM 2.5 particles that exist in smoke. However, larger particles, such as ash, may not be detected. If you smell smoke or see falling ash in your immediate vicinity, consider air quality "unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if RAAN displays lower level of pollution.

The public can also check the District's wildfire page at [www.valleyair.org/wildfires](http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires) for information about any current and recently past wildfires affecting the Valley. In addition, anyone can follow air quality conditions by downloading the free "Valley Air" app on their mobile device.

For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500). District Outreach and Communications personnel are also available for media interviews via Zoom or by phone.