



Valley Air News

A publication of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

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Public cooperation paying off with better air quality

By Dave Crow,
Air Pollution Control Officer

To borrow shamelessly from a sports-drink advertisement: Is it in you?

The stamina to stay the course in the next crucial mile of the race to clean the San Joaquin Valley's air, that is.

By complying with the Check Before You Burn program, Valley residents the past two winters have helped the air basin record some of its cleanest wintertime air data in years. If concentrations of particulate matter known as PM10 remain low through Dec. 31, the Valley could meet an important federal health-based standard.

PM10 is a harmful mix of soot, chemicals, dust, salts, smoke and toxins that can lodge deep in the lungs. Exposure to PM10 can trigger heart attacks, increase risk for lung cancer, aggravate conditions such as asthma and bronchitis, and reduce lung function.

On winter days when air quality is poor, uncontrolled residential wood burning could be responsible for up to one-third of all PM10 emissions in the Valley's urban areas. But residents understand the importance of cleaning up the air and are choosing to reduce their personal contribution to air pollution.

The Check Before You Burn program prohibits the use of wood-burning fireplaces on days when air quality is unhealthy for the general public and discourages wood burning when air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups. Public compliance with the program has been a critical factor in improving air quality. In fact, in 1990 the Valley exceeded the federal daily PM10 limit on more than 55 days. That dropped to 12 days by 2001, and no exceedances have been recorded since 2002. That's monumental progress.

We all deserve recognition for working together to meet important air-quality goals. By continuing the collaboration and leading the state in air-quality innovation, we can clean up our air.

Check Before You Burn

Nov. 1 through Feb. 28

1-(800) SMOG INFO (766-4463)

www.valleyair.org

Fewer Spare the Air requests in 2005

Public awareness and District controls are credited for success

In a continuing trend of dramatically reduced overall levels of summertime smog, only 18 Spare the Air Days were declared throughout the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley air basin, down from 27 such days in 2004.

Last year's total was also a significant reduction from the average number of times during the summer that a Spare the Air Day is called. Spare the Air Days are declared on a county-by-county basis when air quality is expected to be unhealthy (an Air Quality Index forecast of 151 or higher).

Spare the Air is a District-sponsored, voluntary emission-reduction program that targets ozone, the primary ingredient of smog, from early June through late September.

Spare the Air days over the past three years

County	2005	2004	2003
Fresno	18	11	40
Kern	18	27	41
Kings	12	10	39
Madera	9	5	36
Merced	11	5	37
San Joaquin	6	3	15
Stanislaus	9	3	15
Tulare	18	15	39
District-wide	18	27	41

The District attributes this second year of noticeable improvement in part to Valley residents taking to heart well-publicized Spare the Air tips when air quality is deteriorating, such as: driving less through carpooling, taking alternate transportation and linking trips; postponing the use of smog-causing tools such as gas-powered lawn equipment; and making other small changes in everyday behaviors.

AIR QUALITY INDEX

When air quality is forecast to be "Good" or "Moderate," residents who burn are asked to do so as cleanly as possible.	0-50	Good (Green)
	51 - 100	Moderate (Light Yellow)
Residential wood burning is discouraged.	101 - 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Orange)
Residential wood burning is prohibited.	151 - 200	Unhealthy (Red)