

AIR QUALITY IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Despite years of air-quality improvements, the San Joaquin Valley air basin fails to meet state and federal health-based standards. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is required by federal law to adopt stringent control measures to reduce emissions.

Each year, the District receives about 3,000 air-pollution complaints from members of the public. Have you noticed a cloud of smoke and suspected illegal burning? Or have you detected a strong, foul odor? Do you see dirt being tracked out onto public roads from a construction site? These could be violations of air-pollution regulations and should be reported. All complaints are investigated by a District inspector, who treats the complainant's identity as confidential information.

Satisfactory and timely resolution of air-pollution complaints and violations is crucial to the Air District and to the goal of cleaning the Valley's air. Air District inspectors respond to complaints on a priority basis to investigate possible violations.

For more information about the District's Compliance program or how to report a complaint, visit www.valleyair.org.
Or call the nearest District office, listed below.



Northern Region

Serving San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties
4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto, CA 95356-9322
Tel: 209-557-6400 FAX: 209-557-6475
Complaint Line: 1-800-281-7003

Central Region (Main Office)

Serving Madera, Fresno and Kings counties
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, CA 93726-0244
Tel: 559-230-6000 FAX: 559-230-6061
Complaint Line: 1-800-870-1037

Southern Region

Serving Tulare and Valley air basin portions of Kern counties
34946 Flyover Court, Bakersfield, CA 93308
Tel: 661-392-5500 FAX: 661-392-5585
Complaint Line: 1-800-926-5550



Please visit our web sites www.valleyair.org

and



COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Reporting an air-pollution complaint



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

1-800 SMOG INFO
www.valleyair.org

Detect a strong odor? Suspect an illegal burn? See a construction site creating a lot of dust or dirt track-out? The District receives about 3,000 air-pollution complaints a year and prioritizes investigating such reports.

Reporting a Complaint

If you detect a possible air-pollution violation, report it as quickly as possible by calling one of the Air District's toll-free complaint lines (see box at right).

Some possible air-pollution violations to report include:

- an offensive odor;
- smoke, fallout or dust;
- illegal burning, such as a backyard "burn barrel" or burning of trash;
- any other air-pollution violations.



The sooner a complaint is received, the sooner an Air District inspector can begin an investigation. Problems should be reported each day they are observed.

Every complaint received by the District is investigated, and all complainants are contacted unless they request otherwise. The names and addresses of complainants are confidential and are provided only to District staff.

Details are Helpful

When reporting an odor, it is important to provide the wind direction and a detailed description of the odor, especially in situations when the odor has dissipated by the time an inspector arrives. Try to associate the odor with something familiar to most people, such as rotten eggs, sweet or sour chemicals, matches, garlic, acid, chlorine or asphalt. Other useful descriptions include oily, musty, metallic, pungent, light or heavy. Other helpful information is whether the odor is fleeting but recurring or constant for longer periods.

District Response to Complaints

During regular business hours, inspectors respond to complaints as soon as possible. During non-business hours, the District's telephone answering system will forward a complaint to an on-call inspector, who will contact the complainant directly. Air-pollution problems in progress at the time of the complaint generally will be investigated immediately, while other complaints may not be investigated until the next business day, depending on the situation.



During an investigation, the District inspectors, while on site, will record their observations and assess the event for an air-quality violation. The case details are entered into the District's confidential database, where a permanent record is maintained.

A Public Nuisance

Occasionally, the District receives complaints about public nuisances. The state's public-nuisance law prohibits emissions that cause offensive odors or other disturbances in the community, create a threat to public health, or cause damage to property.

Specifically, the California Health and Safety Code section (41700) states that "no person shall discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons...."

Many factors go into determining what satisfies the "considerable number of persons" requirement. In such cases, each incident requires determination by the District. One household represents one complaint, but a group of people in offices, schools or other large groups may meet the "considerable number of persons" criteria.



Complaints about nuisances usually are confirmed by the inspector and the complainant detecting the contaminant (i.e., odor, dust, smoke) together. An exception to this standard is sometimes made for chronic or ongoing nuisance situations, in which case an in-person confirmation of complaints may not be required each time.

Complaint Lines

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Southern Region

Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties
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