

News Release

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San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



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Seventh wood-burning season ends *Winter air quality continues to improve*

The annual Check Before You Burn wood-burning season ended Feb. 28 with continued improvement in the Valley's winter air quality.

The annual program restricts the use of residential wood-burning devices when air quality deteriorates in order to prevent the build-up of dangerous fine-particulate matter (PM2.5). From November through February, wood-burning forecasts are issued each day by county that determine if open-hearth fireplaces, wood stoves or inserts, or pellet stoves can be used. Tickets are issued for violations. Since the rule's adoption by the Valley Air District in 2003, other jurisdictions throughout California have adopted similar regulations.

The Air District praised Valley residents for their cooperation in curtailing the use of fireplaces. "Once again Valley residents have shown great willingness to take part in efforts to protect public health and improve quality of life in our communities," said Seyed Sadredin, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer.

The Air District's estimates that this program brings about more reductions in winter time pollution than all other regulations imposed on Valley businesses. "This is a great example of how we can achieve major reductions in air pollution without having to resort to cost prohibitive regulations on businesses, We continue to see major improvements in Valley's air quality due to this measure," added Seyed Sadredin.

In the 2009-2010 season, there was a 57 percent decrease in the number of Unhealthy days (based on the Air Quality Index) Valley-wide over the 2008-2009 season. The number of days that exceeded the federal health standard for fine-particulate pollution during the wood-burning season also declined by 41 percent over last year. These

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improvements come on the heels of major improvements already experienced in the prior season in 2008-2009 when Valley experienced one cleanest winters on record.

The Air District is currently conducting a comprehensive assessment of the Check Before You Burn wood-burning season that ended on Feb. 28. A detailed report analyzing the effectiveness of the rule and other factors that may have contributed to the major air quality improvements experienced this winter will be presented at a public hearing in April.

This rule reduces fine particles (PM2.5) which have been linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death. Residential wood burning can put as much as 17 tons per day of this dangerous material into the eight-county air basin and is the largest source of particulate pollution during winter months. Surveys have shown that 70 percent of fireplace use is for ambience rather than for heating, although exemptions are available for residents who must burn wood to heat their homes.

The number of wood-burning curtailments and Notices of Violation (fines) by county for the 2009-10 Check Before You Burn season:

County	Wood-burning prohibitions 2009-10 season	Notices of Violation (NOVs)
San Joaquin	21	65
Stanislaus	25	69
Merced	15	49
Madera	20	51
Fresno	33	158
Kings	36	20
Tulare	17	21
Kern (Valley air basin)	41	64

For more information about the Valley Air District, call a regional office: in Fresno, 559-230-6000; in Bakersfield, 661-392-5500; and in Modesto, 209-557-6400.