

News Release

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For: Local News, Health and
Weather sections



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



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Summer wildfires raise air-quality concerns *General smoke safety tips should be followed*

Although a wildfire near Millerton Lake in Fresno and Madera counties is winding down, residents are still reporting localized smoke impacts, and Air District officials said the incident spotlights the issue of how smoke affects public health during the summer.

“Wildfire smoke is a potent source of particulate matter, which can be dangerous to health,” said Samir Sheikh, director of the Air District’s Strategies and Incentives Department. “It’s important that people know how to deal with localized smoke impacts to protect their health.”

Particulate matter – small pieces of airborne material such as soot and ash, which are contained in smoke – can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. People with heart or lung disease should be particularly vigilant about their immediate surroundings and follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality.

During a wildfire, the presence of smoke is often localized, meaning people in the vicinity of the blaze may experience smoke impacts.

“A general rule of thumb is, if you can smell smoke, you’re probably breathing it,” Sheikh said.

In the event of exposure to smoke, people with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality and stay inside in a place with filtered air, such as a central air-conditioning system. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

And officials urge residents to use caution when using campfires, cigarettes, fireworks or any incendiary devices.

The Air District provides current air quality information as well as forecasts that take fire impacts into account. For air-quality forecasts by county, residents can call toll-free (1 800 SMOG INFO [766-4463]) or visit www.valleyair.org.

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.