

News Release

For immediate release

9-1-11

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



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Valley sets clean-air record ***August passes without critical ozone exceedance***

Valley Air District officials credit public participation for reducing emissions in August that kept the air basin within a critical health-based standard for ozone.

It is the first time in recorded history that the air basin did not incur an exceedance for the standard in August.

“This is a historic accomplishment, for which the Valley’s residents and businesses can take credit,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “They used the information provided by Air Alerts to accomplish the objective of keeping ozone levels below this important threshold.”

The Valley’s first Air Alert notification began Aug. 23 and extended through Aug. 29. Air Alert episodes are declared when conditions may lead to ozone formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards. There are steps residents and businesses can take to prevent this. Reducing vehicle use is an important way to reduce these emissions.

Typically, exceedances of the 1-hour ozone standard – which is set at 125 parts per billion – coincide with the start of the school year and increased vehicle traffic. In fact, in August 2010, the first exceedance occurred during the first week of school. Ozone is formed when pollutants combine in heat and sunlight. Temperatures during the Air Alert episode were five degrees above normal, and with added pollution associated with back to school traffic, the ozone concentration rose again; however, this year, with the Valley’s first Air Alert campaign, ozone levels for the first time in history stayed below the threshold in August.

“The air basin has gone from 18 exceedances in August 1996 to two last year, to none this year. It is truly a remarkable accomplishment,” Sadredin said.

Exceeding the 1-hour ozone standard triggers federal monetary penalties. Because of a handful of exceedances in 2010, the air basin was assessed a \$29 million penalty, which will be paid through fees on Valley businesses and residents.

-more-

Historic August in air basin

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Meanwhile, the Air District continues its efforts to have the penalty repealed.

“This penalty does not recognize the incredible improvements we have made across the board in our air quality,” Sadredin said.

Air Alert episodes will be declared during summer when conditions are conducive for ozone formation. When that occurs, the Air District urges residents and businesses to put air-friendly practices into place that may avert an exceedance.

Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by:

- Refraining from idling when dropping off/picking up students
- Carpooling, vanpooling or alternate transportation
- Refraining from using drive-through services

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by:

- Shifting operations to early morning or late evening (lawn care)
- Offering flexible work schedules
- Promoting carpools and vanpools for employees
- Implementing telecommuting
- Becoming a Healthy Air Living Partner

“We continue to be greatly encouraged by the tangible results of all of our efforts in the air basin for cleaner air,” Sadredin said.

For more information about Air Alerts, please visit http://www.valleyair.org/AirAlert/AirAlert_Landing.htm.

To sign up for a free subscription to the Air Alert email notification system please visit <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>.

To receive information about becoming a Healthy Air Living Partner, please visit www.healthyairliving.com.

ATTACHMENT:

2010 Back-to-School Week 1-hour Ozone Trend

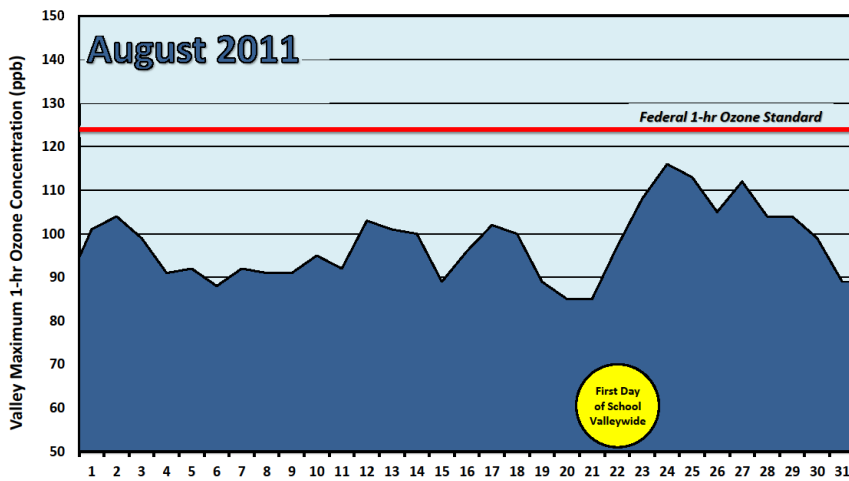
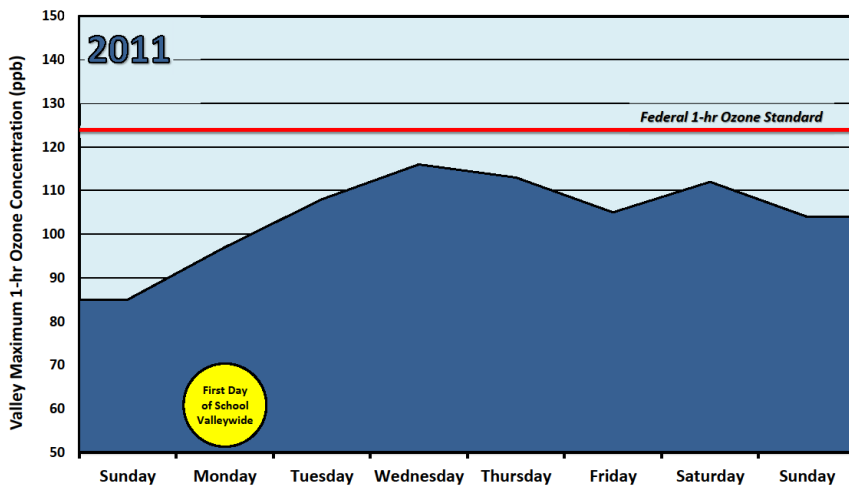
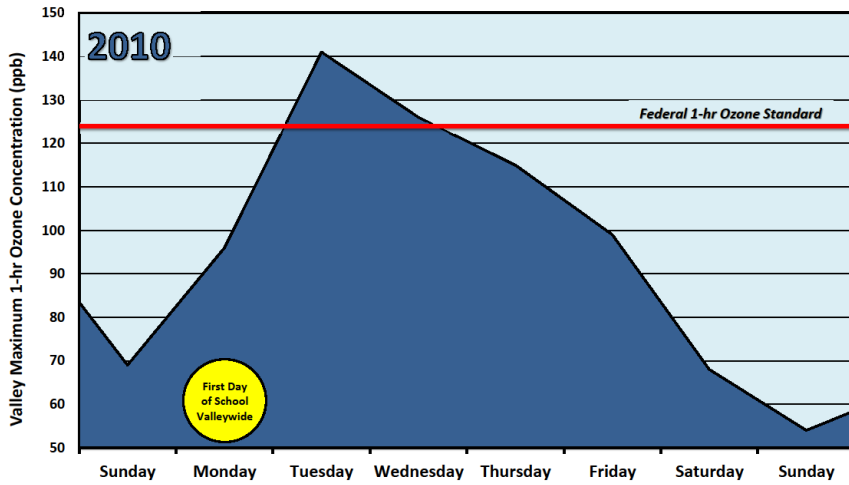
Shows 1-hour ozone levels, and exceedance, for days surrounding the week when the majority of Valley schools were back in session.

2011 Back-to-School Week 1-hour Ozone Trend

Shows 1-hour ozone levels, with no exceedance, for days surrounding the week when the majority of Valley schools were back in session.

2011 August 1-hour Ozone Trend

Overall trend for the month of August 2011. Note no exceedances.



The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern. Visit www.valleyair.org to learn more.