

News Release

For immediate release

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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Season's first Valley-wide wood-burning curtailment in effect ***Poor air quality in all eight counties, maybe through weekend***

The first residential wood-burning curtailment throughout the entire San Joaquin Valley this season is in effect because of deteriorating air quality. And because of poor atmospheric dispersion, the mandatory curtailments may continue through the weekend, Air District officials said.

The prohibition went into effect at midnight on Thursday, Dec. 8 and continues through midnight tonight (Friday). This prohibition applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured fire logs, and outdoor fire pits and chimineas. The curtailment is in effect in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties (with the exception of Frazier Park).

“Particulate emissions from wood burning not only can re-enter your home and affect your indoor air quality, but they also directly affect your neighbor,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “This is a serious health matter and should not be taken lightly.”

Check Before You Burn runs each winter from November through February and reduces wintertime particulate pollution by restricting the use of wood-burning devices when air quality is poor. In fact, the past two winters have been the cleanest on record for the Valley air basin, where wood burning can pump as much as 24 tons per day of particulate matter – small pieces of ash, soot, liquid droplets and other airborne matter – in the air. It causes lung infections, respiratory disease and cancer, and exacerbates cardiac disease, causing heart attacks and stroke.

Other air management districts in California including South Coast (Los Angeles), Bay Area and Sacramento have followed the Valley’s lead and adopted wood-burning regulations. In fact, wood-burning prohibitions are also in effect today in the Sacramento and Bay Area air quality management districts.

Wood-burning forecasts are issued by county and there are two levels of forecast: “Wood Burning Prohibited” or “Please Burn Cleanly.” When a prohibition is declared, burning any solid fuel in a residential fireplace or wood-burning device is not permitted.

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There are two exceptions, however:

- If the residence does not have access to natural gas service, even if propane is used, or
- If burning solid fuel is the sole source of heat for the residence.

Prohibition violations are subject to fines.

“The outstanding response of the Valley’s residents to the necessity of minimizing residential wood burning is not only cleaning up the air during winter, but saving lives,” Sadredin said.

Daily wood-burning forecasts are issued at 4:30 each afternoon and available at <http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnpage.htm>, by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463) or by subscribing to the Air District’s daily air quality forecast at <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>.