

News Release

For immediate release

DATE 2-29-12

For: local news and assignment editors



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



Central District Media Contact - Fresno

Janelle Schneider (559) 230-5853

Northern District Media Contact - Modesto

Anthony Presto (209) 557-6400

Southern District Media Contact - Bakersfield

Brenda Turner (661) 392-5500

Spanish language Media Contact

Maricela Velasquez (559) 230-5849

Check Before You Burn ends ninth season

Historically poor conditions plagued Valley winter

The ninth season of a critical wintertime air quality program that minimizes dangerous airborne particle pollution concluded Feb. 29 with an unusually high number of wood-burning curtailment days because of historically poor conditions this winter.

Check Before You Burn runs from November through February each winter and restricts the use of residential wood-burning devices when air quality deteriorates in order to prevent the build-up of fine-particulate matter (PM2.5). While the two previous winters were the cleanest on record for the eight-county Valley air basin, this winter is a different story because of historically dry, stagnant conditions that resulted in strings of unbroken curtailments during December and January.

“Considering the abnormal conditions this winter that dealt not only us but air districts statewide one blow after another in terms of air quality, this rule was especially critical in minimizing, to the extent possible, this dangerous form of pollution,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s air pollution control officer and executive director.

During winter, wood burning is the largest single source of PM2.5, which is a harmful form of pollution that has been linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death. Residential wood burning can pump as much as 17 tons per day of this pollutant into the air basin.

A Valley-wide wood-burning curtailment results in air pollution reductions equivalent to taking 140,000 trucks off the road.

The number of wood-burning curtailments increased across the board this winter, even quadrupling, depending on the county. In Fresno County last winter, for example, there were 44 wood-burning curtailments – days when residential wood burning was prohibited. This winter, in contrast, Fresno County had 68 curtailment days. (For a comparison of curtailments and notices of violation by county for this winter and last, see the chart on the following page.)

-more-

Ninth CBYB season ends

2-29-12

Page 2 of 2

“It has been a difficult season for everyone in the Valley, and it bears repeating that despite the conditions that escaped our control, the willingness of residents to refrain from wood burning prevented even more dire air quality conditions from forming,” Sadredin said.

Each day during the season, wood-burning forecasts are issued by county that determine if open-hearth fireplaces, wood-burning stoves or inserts, or pellet stoves can be used. Curtailments also apply to outdoor chimineas and fire pits. Violations of these prohibitions result in fines, although exemptions are available to residents for whom wood burning is their sole source of heat or if they have no access to natural gas.

“Despite this winter’s experience, we need to remember that the past two winters were the cleanest on record for the Valley. That is what is possible,” Sadredin said.

A detailed report recapping the most recent wood-burning season will be available at an upcoming public meeting.

<i>County</i>	<i>Prohibitions 2011-12/2010-11</i>	<i>Notices of Violation 2011-12/2010-11</i>
San Joaquin	29/7	88/9
Stanislaus	51/25	152/54
Merced	33/23	119/65
Madera	41/37	54/64
Fresno	68/44	239/74
Kings	49/36	31/16
Tulare	54/33	55/30
Kern (Valley portion)	56/40	89/36
Kern (Frazier Park)	0/0	0/0

For more information about Check Before You Burn, visit www.valleyair.org. For 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).