

News Release

For immediate release

3-1-13

Attn: Local news & assignment
editors



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Better air quality, fewer wood-burning bans this winter *Winter air quality continues improvement*

Dramatically improved air quality in the Valley air basin this winter resulted in fewer residential wood-burning curtailments than during the previous Check Before You Burn season.

The annual wintertime program that reduces dangerous particle pollution ended its 10th season Feb. 28. During the 2012-13 season, there were 187 curtailments District-wide (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties). This compares to 381 curtailments during the 2011-12 season, representing a decrease of over 50 percent Valleywide, in the number of curtailment days from last season. *(For curtailments by county, see the chart that follows.)*

There were just three days during this winter when air quality was “unhealthy” in any county, compared to 41 such days last winter. Also, the number of days when air quality was rated “unhealthy for sensitive groups” decreased by 54 percent over last winter.

“We owe a great deal of gratitude to Valley residents for their cooperation and the resulting improvements in air quality,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer.

Check Before You Burn, which curtails residential wood burning when air quality deteriorates in order to prevent build-up of fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), is the District’s single most-successful and cost-effective regulation. Since it was adopted in 2003, the air basin has seen dramatic improvements to winter air quality, when residential wood burning is the largest single source of PM2.5.

PM2.5 – small particles of soot, ash and other airborne material -- is a harmful form of air pollution that is linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death. One Valley-wide curtailment results in air-pollution reductions equivalent to taking 140,000 trucks off the road.

“Over the past 10 years, Valley residents have come to understand the serious health consequences of residential wood burning and support this critical regulation,” Sadredin said. “Our improving winter air quality reflects that.”

The residential wood-burning rule (Rule 4901) was strengthened in 2008. As part of the District’s

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recently adopted 2012 PM2.5 plan, the rule will once again be tightened to enable the air basin to attain this important standard while providing additional burn days for Valley residents with cleaner EPA-certified wood stoves. District staff is beginning an exhaustive process to develop this amended rule, including public workshops and aggressive outreach seeking input from Valley residents.

Each day at 4:30 p.m., the District issues wood-burning forecasts for each of the air basin's eight counties beginning at midnight for the following 24 hours. Forecasts are derived through analyzing many factors, including meteorology, expected emissions, atmospheric patterns and other variables.

Forecasts are available through many means, including:

- The toll-free forecast number, 1-800 SMOG INFO (466-7763)
- <http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>
- Automated emails (<http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>)
- A free iPhone app ("valley air") available through the iPhone App Store and iTunes

For more information about Check Before You Burn, visit www.valleyair.org or call a regional office: in Fresno (559) 230-6000, in Modesto (209) 557-6400 or in Bakersfield (661) 392-5500.

<i>County</i>	<i>Prohibitions 2012-13/2011-12</i>	<i>Notices of Violation 2012-13/2011-12</i>
San Joaquin	21 [29]	84 [88]
Stanislaus	28 [51]	69 [152]
Merced	2 [33]	2 [119]
Madera	6 [41]	24 [54]
Fresno	43 [68]	128 [239]
Kings	27 [49]	6 [31]
Tulare	24 [54]	19 [55]
Kern (Valley portion)	36 [56]	28 [89]