

News Release

For immediate release

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San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



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Severe conditions thwart potential clean-air record

11th Check Before You Burn season ends with increased curtailments

Historically abnormal, severe meteorological conditions plagued the state and Central Valley this winter, resulting in a dramatic increase in wood-burning curtailments during the 11th Check Before You Burn residential wood-burning season.

During the season, which began Nov. 1, 2013 and ended Friday, Feb. 28, the incidence of wood-burning curtailments throughout the eight-county air basin was up 102 percent over last winter. Check Before You Burn requires wood-burning curtailments on days when levels of fine-particulate matter (PM2.5) are forecast to exceed the federal health standard. Wood-burning forecasts are issued daily for each county.

“This was an unusual winter not only for the Valley but for the entire state,” said Jaime Holt, the Air District’s chief communications officer. “Without these extreme conditions, this winter would have been the cleanest on record for the Valley,” continuing the trend of dramatic air-quality improvement each winter since Check Before You Burn was enacted more than a decade ago.

PM2.5 is a particularly harmful type of air pollution that is linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death. Check Before You Burn minimizes the build-up of particulates.

In the Valley, a total of 376 curtailments were declared among all counties, versus 186 during the 2012-13 season. Violations issued for noncompliance with curtailments were also up, from a total of 384 in 2012-13 to 569 this season. (See chart below for details.)

Each day at 4:30 p.m., the District issues wood-burning forecasts by county beginning at midnight for the following 24 hours. Forecasts are derived from analyzing multiple factors, including meteorology, expected emissions and other variables. Despite a decrease in emissions that cause PM2.5 to form, meteorological conditions including record low rainfall, stubborn stagnant inversions and abnormally high temperatures overwhelmed strong air pollution control measures and produced large increases in PM concentrations.

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Unusual conditions produced more wood-burning bans

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The picture was the same throughout California, as even coastal areas recorded high particulate levels. For example, San Luis Obispo recorded their highest PM2.5 levels on record, and other air basins experienced multiple days of exceedances and curtailments.

As part of the District's 2012 PM2.5 plan, the rule is being tightened to enable the air basin to attain this important health standard. The rule is undergoing an exhaustive, public process including workshops and aggressive outreach seeking input from Valley residents.

"Despite our experience this winter, it's important for people to remember that overall we have experienced significant, long-term improvement in winter air quality, thanks to Valley residents embracing Check Before You Burn and refraining from wood burning," said Holt.

Daily wood-burning forecasts are available from November through February at www.valleyair.org/CBYB, 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463) and through a free iPhone app, Valley Air. For more information about Check Before You Burn or the Air District, contact a regional office: in Fresno (559-230-6000), in Modesto (209-557-6400) or in Bakersfield (661-392-5500) or visit www.valleyair.org/CBYB.

<i>County</i>	<i>Prohibitions 2013-14 (2012-13)</i>	<i>Notices of Violation 2013-14 (2012-13)</i>
San Joaquin	45 (21)	72 (84)
Stanislaus	53 (28)	130 (69)
Merced	25 (2)	65 (2)
Madera	39 (6)	21 (24)
Fresno	59 (43)	163 (128)
Kings	53 (27)	24 (6)
Tulare	51 (24)	47 (19)
Kern (Valley portion)	51 (36)	47 (28)
TOTALS	376 (186)	569 (384)