

NEWS Release

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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Officials schedule Air Alert dry run as back-to-school traffic increases

Notification system on standby for increasing ozone levels

Due to good to moderate air quality expected next week throughout the Valley, local air officials are asking Valley residents to conduct a “Practice Air Alert” by making and implementing plans to reduce their driving Monday through Friday, Aug. 22.

The annual Air Alert program minimizes ozone levels when conditions materialize that are conducive to ozone formation: high temperatures, sunny skies, stagnant air flow and increased emissions. Typically, episodes of late-summer high ozone are correlated to back-to-school traffic and increased vehicle idling. High ozone levels are harmful to health.

“For some parents, especially during this back-to-school window, driving less will take some planning and effort. Putting together a carpool or modifying schedules so parents can walk kids to school doesn’t just happen.” said Jaime Holt, the Air District’s chief communications officer. “Next week’s practice Air Alert gives parents an opportunity to put some thought into what they can feasibly do so that can be ready when we really need their action to help avoid ozone exceedances.”

This year, a trend of lower ozone exceedance continues, with a record number of consecutive days with no exceedances of the more stringent 8-hour standard (75 ppb standard) anywhere in the Valley despite a long stretch of triple-digit temperatures. However, the Air Alert program is being continued this summer to help the Valley maintain that progress and ensure continued reductions in peak ozone levels.

During an Air Alert, residents are asked to reduce their vehicle emissions through a variety of measures, including:

- Not idling when dropping off or picking up students
- Carpooling, vanpooling and using alternative transportation
- Refraining from using drive-through services

“Since this program began three years ago, we have had tremendous participation by Valley residents and businesses, who understand the connection between air quality and health,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “The Air Alert program was vital to the historic achievement last summer” of having zero violations of the federal 1-hour ozone standard.

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by shifting operations to early morning or late evening, when ozone levels are lower, offering flexible work schedules, promoting carpools and vanpools for employees, and becoming a Healthy Air Living partner.

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Additionally, residents can check their current, localized air quality by subscribing to the free Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN), which links a computer or smart phone to any monitor in the District's Valley-wide network. Hourly, automated emails are delivered when air quality is changing. For more information or to subscribe, visit www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

To receive notification of an actual Air Alert, please call 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463), visit the Air District's website at www.valleyair.org, or subscribe to the free automated Air Alert email list at <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>. Also, visit the District on Facebook at Healthy Air Living and follow us on Twitter (@Valleyair).