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Wildfire smoke threatens public health in the Valley

Air officials extend health caution through week

Smoke from the Rough Fire is affecting air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley prompting air officials to issue a health cautionary statement. Strong high pressure is causing stagnant dispersion conditions resulting in widespread smoke impacts across Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, Tulare, Stanislaus, San Joaquin and the valley portion of Kern counties. Air officials encourage the public to exercise caution and urge schools in affected areas to keep students inside. Smoke impacts will continue through the week and the health caution remains in effect until the fire is extinguished.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air District officials urge residents to follow their doctors' orders when exposed to fire emissions.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-381-1809).