

For immediate release 11/15/16

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Wildland fires burning in Tulare and Fresno Counties prompt health caution

The public may experience poor air quality and should take action to protect their health

The District is issuing a health cautionary statement for Fresno, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern Counties, due to smoke from wildland fires burning in these areas. Smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountainous and foothill areas of the air basin, but have the potential to impact adjacent counties as well the Valley floor, until the fire is extinguished.

Due to the unprecedented tree mortality in our mountain and foothill communities, the District is working in conjunction with land management agencies to reduce the fuel load in those areas through targeted temporary managed burns. This managed burning helps reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire as well as the accompanying air quality impacts and potential property damage and loss of life that come from large wildfires such as the Rough Fire in 2015. Visit this link to learn about the District's effort to minimize the number and severity of future wildfires: http://www.valleyair.org/Board_meetings/GB/agenda_minutes/Agenda/2015/November/final/09.pdf.

Smoke from these fires produces particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. 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 wildfire emissions and stay indoors if at all possible.

Please be advised that the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM_{2.5} which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore, an area may be experiencing ash impacts from these fires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash, that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" and remain indoors. Residents can visit www.valleyair.org/RAAN to check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions.

For more information, call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).