

For immediate release 05/19/17

Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Wildfire in Fresno County prompts health caution

Heat and high pressure will remain through the weekend, affecting air quality conditions

Smoke from the Elm Fire near Hwy 198 in Coalinga is affecting air quality in the western portion of the San Joaquin Valley and has the potential to impact Fresno, Kings and the western portions of Kern County. Currently, smoke impacts originally concentrated in the foothill areas to the west of the air basin have moved to the Valley floor and impacts are likely until the fire is extinguished.

Under these weather conditions, there is potential for new fires to occur across the Valley this weekend. Smoke from wildfires produces particulate matter (PM2.5), 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 PM2.5 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 wildfires 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" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) and remain indoors.

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 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 (661-392-5500).