

For immediate release 08/19/17

Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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South Fork Fire in Mariposa County prompts health caution

Smoke from the South Fork Fire located in Mariposa County is affecting air quality in Oakhurst, with the potential to impact mountain communities and other areas near the fire including Bass Lake, Coarsegold, and the eastern side of the San Joaquin Valley. The health caution will remain in place and smoke impacts will continue, until the fire is extinguished.

Smoke from 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 PM 2.5 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 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 potential fires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can smell smoke or see 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 nearest RAAN monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions at 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).