

# SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact:

Charlie Goldberg/Public Education  
Fresno -- (559) 230-5851  
Kelly Hogan Malay/Public Education  
Bakersfield -- (661) 326-6981

***District launches voluntary program to reduce wood burning;  
introduces proposed rule to mandate no residential wood burning on polluted days***

The Valley Air District today launched its wintertime wood burning reduction campaign and discussed rule amendments that in the future will prohibit wood burning on the most polluted nights. The voluntary program and the proposed rule amendments seek to reduce the San Joaquin Valley's serious particulate matter (PM) pollution problem.

At a news event, District representatives kicked off the annual "Please Don't Light Tonight" program and reminded residents to spare the air by reserving their wood-burning fireplaces for special occasions. On days when areas of the Valley are approaching unhealthy levels of fine airborne particles, the District will issue requests through the media for residents to refrain from lighting their wood-burning stoves and fireplaces for 24 hours. Residents also can verify whether a no-light request has been issued by calling 1-800-Smog-Info. The appeals are strictly voluntary this year and are not intended for homes in which wood burning is the only source of heat. The Please Don't Light Tonight campaign runs through the end of February.

"In future winters, these requests will not be voluntary," Air District Spokesperson Josette Merced Bello said, referring to proposed rule amendments that would restrict wood burning beginning in 2003. Amendments to District Rule 4901 will be presented to the public at workshops tentatively scheduled for December. Proposed amendments to the rule include:

Mandatory curtailment. On days when airborne particulates reach unhealthy levels, the Air District would restrict residential wood burning. The District projects the restrictions would be in effect about 20 days each winter in different areas of the Valley. Gas and propane devices would not be subject to the rule.

Additionally, other cleaner burning technologies, such as those certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), would be exempt on some restricted days. Other exemptions are being considered for homes that use wood burning as their sole source of heat and devices used above 3000' elevation. Similar mandatory curtailment programs are in effect in Mammoth Lakes, Calif.; Reno, Nev.; Denver, Colo.; and Spokane, Wash.

Limits on the number of wood-burning devices allowed in new housing developments. This density requirement would limit the number of new indoor and outdoor wood burning devices, such as fireplaces, wood burning stoves and chimineas, in new housing developments.

Required retrofit or retirement of non-certified wood-burning equipment upon the sale of existing homes.

This amendment would require the current owner of a property to remove, replace or render a non-

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compliant woodstove inoperable before selling or transferring ownership of property. Non-compliant open fireplaces would need to be retrofitted with an EPA-certified insert or rendered inoperable before sale or transfer of the property.

“Before these amendments are approved and implemented, we want to alert Valley residents to their options when purchasing or retrofitting stoves or fireplaces,” Merced Bello said. Clean-burning gas, pellet and wood stoves and inserts on display at the news event demonstrated the visible emissions differences between a variety of wood and gas products.

Merced Bello explained that natural gas- and propane-burning units would be exempt altogether from the new regulations because they emit negligible amounts of particles. EPA-certified wood-burning devices create considerably less air pollution than open fireplaces, and therefore will be restricted only on the most polluted nights, probably between five and ten days each winter. “Valley residents who like a fire will face fewer restrictions and keep more options open if they install the cleaner units,” she said. “And they will pollute less when they use them.”

Clean-burning gas, pellet and wood stoves and inserts on display at the event demonstrated the visible emission reductions over older devices. John Crouch, spokesperson for the Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association (HPBA), pointed out that an open fireplace emits up to 47 grams per hour of particulate matter. By comparison, an EPA-certified woodstove emits less than 6 grams per hour; a pellet stove about one gram per hour; and a gas device less than one gram per hour. “We want to make sure Valley residents know there are ways they can enjoy a nice fire, warm their homes and still be good neighbors,” Crouch said. HPBA is the national fireplace industry trade association.

The San Joaquin Valley fails health-based standards for particulate matter. PM is a mixture of pollutants, including microscopic pieces of soot, ash, salts, nitrates and smoke particles. Breathing the particles can reduce lung function, especially in children; aggravate heart and lung conditions such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis; increase the risk of heart attacks; irritate throats and sinuses; and trigger headaches and allergies.

District Rule 4901, which was originally adopted in 1993, established the voluntary Please Don't Light Tonight program. The rule also limits the sale of non-certified wood stoves and heaters and regulates the sale of seasoned firewood. In February 2002, the EPA ruled that these provisions do not fully comply with Clean Air Act requirements for the control of residential wood burning, a significant contributor to high particulate levels, especially in densely populated urban areas. The proposed amendments address these deficiencies.

## Particulate Matter Fact Sheet

### What is particulate matter?

Particulate matter (PM) is a mixture of pollutants, including microscopic pieces of soot, ash, salts, nitrates and smoke particles. The particles of the greatest concern are those 10 microns and smaller (PM10), including particles 2.5 microns and smaller (PM2.5). PM10 particles are about 1/7<sup>th</sup> the width of a human strand of hair. PM from fires is the result of incomplete combustion of the fuel. The resulting particles are lifted into the air by heat, wind and human activity. Cool, damp air common during San Joaquin Valley winters suspends these particles close to ground level where Valley residents can inhale them

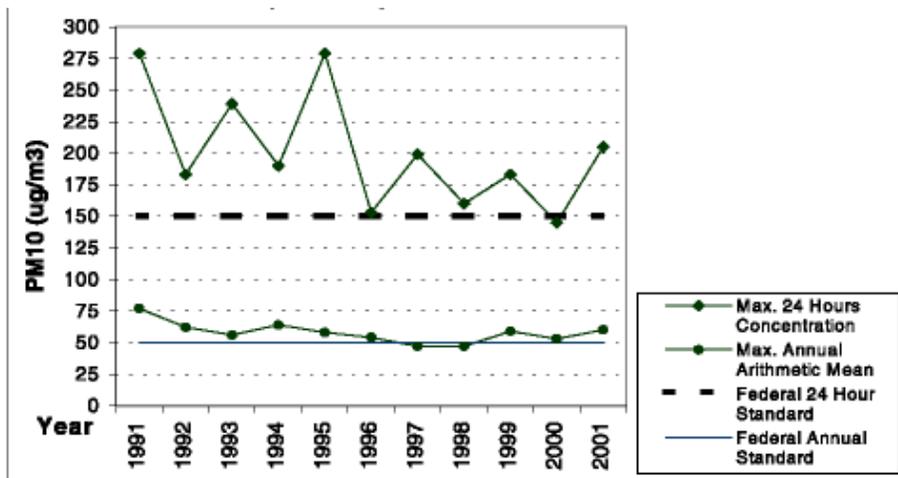
### What is the health impact of PM?

PM is a health concern because it can evade the body's natural filtering systems in the nose, throat and lungs and can become lodged deep in the lungs. Inhaling PM can reduce lung function, especially in children; aggravate heart and lung conditions such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis; increase the risk of heart attacks; irritate throats and sinuses; and trigger headaches and allergies. Exposure to PM has been linked to premature death.

### How serious is the San Joaquin Valley's PM problem?

The San Joaquin Valley Air Basin is classified as a serious PM10 "non-attainment" area, the worst possible classification under the federal Clean Air Act. The Valley air basin must meet two standards to be re-classified an "attainment" area—a 24-hour average and an annual average standard. The chart below summarizes the Valley's performance versus both of these standards.

**San Joaquin Valley Ambient PM10 Concentrations**



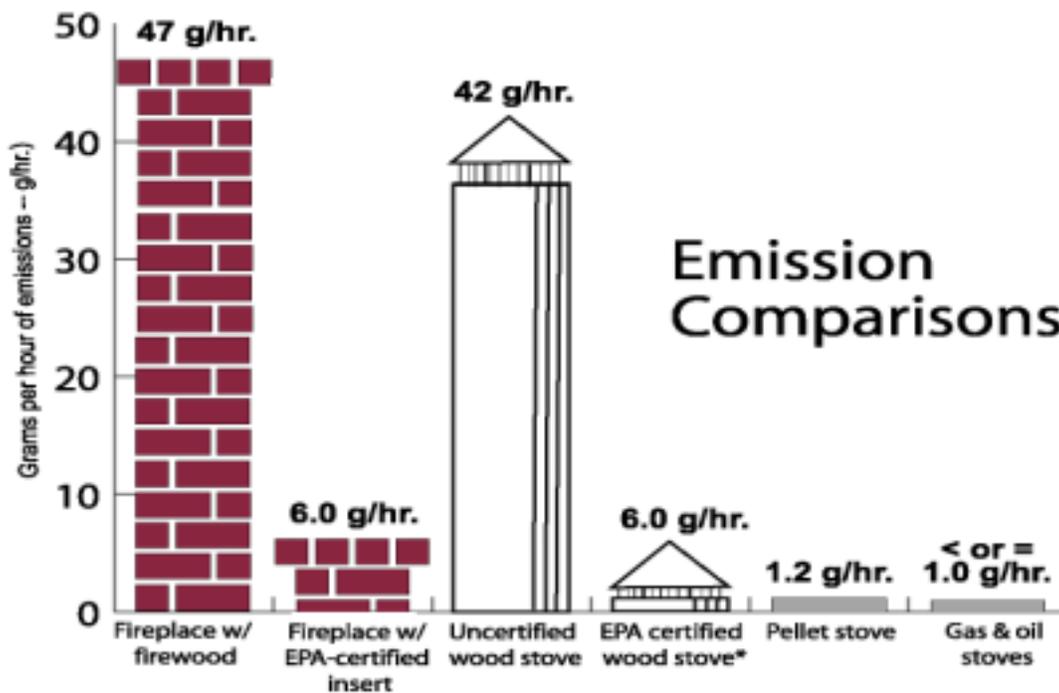
### How does wood smoke contribute to the Valley’s pollution problems?

The California Air Resource’s Board’s 2000 PM10 “Emission Inventory” shows that residential wood burning emissions from solid fuel devices account for approximately 12.7 tons of PM10 per day (based on an annual average) in the San Joaquin Valley. As wood burning increases with cold weather, so do emissions. From October through December, residential wood burning produces about 21.4 tons of PM10 emissions daily. From January through March, that number increases to 25.2 tons of PM10 emissions each day.

Even if a Valley resident does not burn wood, studies indicate that wood smoke from a neighbor’s fire can enter his or her home. The pollution levels inside a closed home can be up to 70 percent of the outdoor level.

### How much cleaner are newer wood burning technologies?

Older wood burning devices not only pollute more, they also are inefficient heaters. These devices do not burn fuel completely. They can suck the fire’s warm air up the chimney. They also turn much of the firewood into smoke, which does not heat the home. The chart below shows the emission averages for various devices.



\*Although many EPA-certified wood stoves sold today test as low as 1.5 grams per hour in the laboratory, the average wood stove emits 5.0 to 6.0 grams per hour in real-world use. The nationwide EPA-certification limits emissions to 7.5 grams per hour.  
**Source: Environmental Protection Agency**