

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

Local News, Health and Weather sections

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High winds prompt health warning

Air pollution levels climbing; caution urged throughout the San Joaquin Valley

Strong winds in many parts of the San Joaquin Valley have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement effective through 10 a.m. Thursday.

The winds are kicking up particulate matter ten microns and smaller, or PM10, which could pose a threat to public health.

“Depending on where you are and what the local conditions are like, the airborne dust and dirt could be at concentrations that are unhealthy,” said Gary Arcemont, a meteorologist for the Air District.

Air District employees in the field today have noted blowing dust in several parts of the Valley, and so residents throughout the Valley are urged to use caution.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

On Feb. 16, 2006, the Valley Air District's governing board approved a Natural Events Action Plan (NEAP) that outlines a protocol to inform the public when unusual natural events occur. The purpose of the plan is to identify and minimize public exposure to these unusual events. The full text of the NEAP is available online at http://www.valleyair.org/Air_Quality_Plans/docs/NEAP.pdf.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For more information, visit <http://www.valleyair.org/> or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.