

News Release

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For Immediate Release

TO:

Local News, Health and Weather sections



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Air District issues health alert

High particulate levels require vigilance through weekend

(Fresno, CA) – High concentrations of particulate matter in several Valley counties are resulting in unhealthy air quality, warns the Valley Air District.

Levels of PM2.5 – the smallest form of particulate matter, which can have serious health effects – have been rising over the past few days and are expected to continue to be high over the weekend, according to District officials.

PM2.5 levels have been highest in Kern County, which registered air quality in the Unhealthy range yesterday with a reading of 152 on the Air Quality Index (AQI). Fresno and Tulare counties have registered levels in the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups range. Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties recorded Moderate levels yesterday.

PM2.5 can exacerbate existing lung ailments and, according to recent research, trigger heart attacks. The tiny components of PM2.5, which measure 2.5 millionths of a meter or smaller, include nitrates, salts, soot, smoke and other byproducts of combustion.

To protect themselves from the effects of poor air quality, residents should check the air-quality forecast daily and adjust their activities accordingly. The forecast for Saturday will be available at 4 p.m. today at www.valleyair.org.

When air quality is in the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups range (an AQI of 101 – 150), people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should cut back or reschedule strenuous activities, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. When air quality is in the Unhealthy range (an AQI of 151 – 200), *everyone* should cut back or reschedule strenuous activities, while people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid strenuous activities altogether.

“The air is more stagnant now than it usually is during the spring,” said Gary Arcemont, Air District meteorologist. “We urge Valley residents to protect their health, check the air-quality forecast daily and be cautious when choosing their activities this weekend.”

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 www.valleyair.org or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.