

# News Release

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For Immediate Release



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## Residents can 'make or break' Thanksgiving Day air quality

Unique situation calls for cooperation from the public in five Valley counties

(Fresno, CA) – Without good cooperation from residents, air quality Thursday may end up being unhealthy for the general public in five counties in the San Joaquin Valley. Therefore, residents of Stanislaus, Merced, Fresno, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern counties are being asked to voluntarily refrain from using fireplaces and woodstoves on Thanksgiving Day to help improve local air quality.

A weather trough expected to move into northern California on Thursday may help disperse pollutants and thereby lead to better air quality. The trough, however, may not create enough dispersion in the affected Valley counties to offset emissions from increased holiday traffic and residential burning.

"This is a unique situation, because it falls right on Thanksgiving Day, when wood smoke emissions typically elevate," said Jaime Holt, the Valley Air District's public information administrator. "If folks burn a lot of wood, then we could see very poor air quality in these areas. Valley residents truly can make or break our air quality this Thanksgiving."

Voluntary curtailments have been issued for the five counties on Friday, as well. No mandatory curtailments have been issued in the Valley for Thursday or Friday. Saturday's wood-burning status will be available by 4 p.m. Friday. The wood-burning status and daily air-quality forecast are provided in English and Spanish toll-free at 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) and at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). Updates in Hmong are available toll-free at 1-877-344-1212.

The Check Before You Burn program, which runs Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, aims to reduce fall and wintertime air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley by either discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood-burning heaters and fireplaces when air quality is expected to be unhealthy. When wood burning is allowed, residents are urged to burn as cleanly as possible by using gas or propane devices, wood inserts and stoves manufactured after July 1990, pellet-fueled heaters, or manufactured firelogs in an open fireplace.

"We can't stress enough how important the public's cooperation is to air quality this holiday season. Anything that residents can do to reduce their emissions will have a direct impact on the air we breathe," Holt said.

The wood-burning curtailment program should not be confused with other Air District programs that regulate hazard-reduction burning, prescribed burning and agricultural burning. Also, it is illegal to burn garbage or treated wood either in a fireplace or outdoors at any time.

Mandatory and voluntary wood-burning restrictions do not apply to natural gas or propane devices; homes in which wood burning is the sole source of heat, homes located at elevations higher than 3,000 feet; and homes where natural gas service is not available.

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