

News Release

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For Immediate Release

TO:
Local News Sections



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

North District Media Contact - Modesto
Anthony Presto: (209) 557-6400

Central District Media Contact - Fresno
Kelly Hogan Malay: (559) 230-6000

South District Media Contact - Bakersfield
Brenda Turner: (661) 326-6900

Coming weather causes fireplace concerns

(Fresno, CA) – A high-pressure weather system expected to make its way into the San Joaquin Valley on Friday afternoon and linger for the weekend may lead to significant wood-smoke effects throughout the Valley on Christmas Day.

Residents are asked to pay particular attention to their county's residential wood-burning status Friday through Sunday. Burning wood, pellets or fire logs may be either prohibited or discouraged on a voluntary basis, depending on the air-quality forecast. Even where wood burning is allowed, however, residents are asked to carefully consider cleaner alternatives to burning solid fuels.

“The predicted high-pressure system creates the kind of weather pattern that typically leads to high concentrations of particulates,” said Evan Shipp, the Air District's chief meteorologist. “We may not get to the point that we issue a mandatory curtailment, but if a voluntary curtailment is in effect and everyone lights up their fireplaces, things could get bad very quickly.”

Particulates, the primary air pollutant in the Valley during winter months, can be inhaled deep into the lungs and aggravate existing lung conditions such as asthma and bronchitis. Long-term exposure can increase the risk of heart attacks and lung cancer.

Residential wood burning Valley-wide emits about 24 tons per day of particulates, or four times the amount emitted by all the motor vehicles traveling on Valley roads and highways. On the worst winter days, wood smoke is responsible for nearly one-third of the particulate pollution in the Valley's urban areas.

Wood-burning restrictions do not apply to natural gas or propane devices; homes at elevations of 3,000 feet or higher; homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat; and homes in areas with no natural-gas service.

If burning wood is absolutely necessary, cleaner options include pellet-fueled heaters, manufactured fire logs in open fireplaces, and EPA Phase II-certified devices. Residents also should be aware that even when residential wood burning is allowed, it is illegal to burn garbage – including wrapping paper -- either in a fireplace or outdoors.

The wood-burning status is available in English and Spanish toll-free at 1-800-Smog-Info (766-4463) or 559-230-5875, and at www.valleyair.org. Updates in Hmong are available toll-free at 1-877-344-1212.

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