

Deadline kicks in for burn permits

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, April 27, 2010

Beginning Saturday, burn permits are required in Tuolumne and Calaveras counties and eastern Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Burn permits set to expire in April will have the expiration date extended to June 1. Because of recent rain and more storms predicted, Cal Fire will not begin to staff all its fire stations until May 24.

Before starting a debris fire, check burn day status by calling the local air pollution control district with jurisdiction over your area: San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, 877-429-2876; Tuolumne County, 533-5598; Calaveras County, 754-6600.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Monday, April 26, 2010:](#)

Health: Cleaning the air for Hanford kids

By Barbara Anderson

Kids are breathing easier at five schools in the Hanford Elementary School District.

And the schools and district are being recognized for steps to clean the air and reduce asthma attacks and the triggers that can cause them.

On Monday, the California Department of Public Health released a list of 15 schools receiving Achievements in Respiratory Health awards.

The five in Hanford are Hamilton, Washington, Roosevelt, Simas and Richmond elementary schools.

The schools won the awards for keeping air inside classrooms clear and clean, as well as keeping children safe from bad air quality on the outside, said Karen McConnell, director of special services for the Hanford Elementary School District.

Some of the steps the schools have taken include using environmentally-friendly cleaning supplies inside classrooms. All the schools are smoke free - including no smoking allowed by parents waiting to pick up students in school parking lots.

Buses are shut down if they are idling longer than 30 seconds, and parents are encouraged to shut off their car engines if they're idling for any length of time, McConnell said. The schools fly color-coded flags to alert principals, teachers and students about outdoor air quality.

Even maintenance crews are involved in the clean-air effort. They work "diligently in eliminating any excess moisture or condensation in classrooms or leaks" that would lead to mold, McConnell said.

And school nurses teach a class called "Open Airways" that teaches children about asthma and what can trigger attacks and how to avoid the triggers, she said. Students know, for example, if a teacher wears perfume that is irritating their airways, they should talk to the teacher, McConnell said.

For their clean-air efforts, the schools receive a trophy, recognition - and money. Washington and Hamilton will get \$2,000 for distinguished achievement, McConnell said. Simas and Richmond schools receive \$1,500 for the award of excellence and Roosevelt gets \$1,000 for an award of achievement.

McConnell said she doesn't know how the principals will spend the money, but "I'm sure they'll come up with something fun and that supports the healthy air that we've been recognized for."

She plans to ask state health officials to present the awards at the school district meeting May 5.

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, April 27, 2010:](#)
Ban burning in the foothills

On March 17, on South Fork Drive in Three Rivers, Tulare County road maintenance people and a crew of inmates burned many piles of brush and branches. The county had previously sawed off the branches to improve visibility around blind curves and to eliminate branches protruding into the road. One-third of the branches had been removed weeks earlier by chipping and shredding.

On St. Patrick's Day, the remaining branches were gathered into piles and set afire. A fire water truck was at the ready.

I drove past them at 10:30 a.m. when the first bonfire shot flames 25 feet into the air, withering the overhanging branches of an oak and heating up the interior of my car to a surprising degree.

There are four good reasons not to burn green waste along narrow South Fork Drive:

- Creation of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Creation of smoky air pollution, which remained in our narrow valley for hours.
- Damage to the road berm by the heavy fire truck. (The road berm serves safety and storm-water runoff functions).
- Soil erosion on the steep banks on both sides of the road. A wide area around each pile of branches was cleared to bare dirt. A trench was dug around that and a berm thrown up around the trench. These cleared and disturbed areas extended onto slopes. Perhaps you don't realize that we foothill residents spend a considerable amount of time battling soil erosion. You just made our job harder.

The ash heaps were unattended that evening and overnight. Twenty-four hours later, some of the ash and charred wood piles were still smoldering.

Why didn't the county use the chipper/shredder for all the branches?

I want you to ban the road maintenance folks from burning branches ever again in the foothills.

As a matter of fact, I want burning of green waste in the foothills banned completely. I am sick of breathing the smoke.

Carole Clum, Three Rivers