

Annual fireplace regulations now in place

By Dennis McCall

Taft Midway Driller, Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2010

Taft, Calif. — The annual fireplace-use regulation program aimed at reducing harmful airborne particulate pollution began its eighth season Monday.

Check Before You Burn, which runs from November through February each winter, determines when residential wood burning will add dangerous levels of particulate matter – tiny pieces of soot, ash, dust and other materials – to the Valley’s air, and prohibits the use of residential wood-burning devices. Wood-burning forecasts are issued by county each day.

“This rule has been critical in helping the Valley reduce the presence of particulate pollution during the winters,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer.

In fact, the previous winter – 2009-10 -- was the cleanest on record for the air basin, and officials credit Check Before You Burn.

High levels of particulate pollution can have serious health effects, including bronchitis, lung disease and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Young children, elderly people and people with existing respiratory and coronary disease are especially vulnerable.

There are two forecast levels, depending on air quality: “Wood burning Prohibited” and “Please Burn Cleanly.” When a prohibition is declared, burning any solid fuel in a residential fireplace or wood-burning device is not permitted and violations may result in fines. Backyard chimineas and fire pits are also subject to the prohibitions. There are two exemptions:

- If the residence does not have access to natural-gas service, even if propane is available; or
- If burning solid fuel is the sole source of heat for the residence.

When burning is allowed, the Air District recommends using manufactured fire logs such as Duraflame or dry, seasoned wood to minimize emissions.

Daily wood-burning forecasts will be available by county each day at 4:30 p.m., beginning Sunday at <http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnpage.htm>, by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463) or by subscribing to the Air District’s daily air quality forecast at <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>.

