

Study: Hanford air among nation's worst

By Seth Nidever

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Hanford air, already among the poorest in the U.S., declined in quality in most categories, according to an American Lung Association report released Tuesday.

The report, covering the years 2007-2009, ranked Hanford in the top 10 worst in ozone, short-term particle pollution and long-term particle pollution.

Short-term particle pollution is an average over a 24-hour period, and it includes the number of days with pollution spikes and the intensity of each spike. Long-term particle pollution is the daily average over an entire year.

Hanford and Bakersfield were the only cities with the worst long-term particle problem that did not improve. Hanford also slipped in the short-term category, having more days over the limit or higher daily spikes than it did in the previous report, covering 2006-2008.

The San Joaquin Valley as a whole did not do well. Of eight cities that were in violation of national pollution standards, four were from the Valley - Hanford, Visalia, Fresno and Bakersfield.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials said the bad ratings were because of a spike in pollution in 2008 due to a series of major wildfires that year.

"In 2008, we had 2,000 wildfires in and around the Valley, and they led to high particulate concentrations in the summer," said Seyed Sadredin, air district executive director. Sadredin said those numbers got averaged into three years before and three years after.

"The number of exceedances and the number of unhealthy days have gone down in all eight counties in the district. [The report] doesn't really show the big improvement in 2010 and 2011 that we've had," Sadredin said.

Tony Barba, the Kings County supervisor who is a director at the air district, couldn't be reached for comment.

Bad air days

Worst 10 for ozone

2. Bakersfield-Delano
3. Visalia-Porterville
4. Fresno-Madera
6. Hanford-Corcoran
9. Merced

Year-round particle pollution

1. Bakersfield-Delano
2. Visalia-Porterville
5. Hanford-Corcoran
6. Fresno-Madera
10. Modesto

Short-term particle pollution

1. Bakersfield-Delano
2. Fresno-Madera
4. Los Angeles
7. Visalia-Porterville
9. Hanford-Corcoran
10. Sacramento

