

News Release

For immediate release

DATE 4-26-11



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



For: local news and assignment editors

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Air District offers tips for understanding annual air quality report

The annual State of the Air Report by the American Lung Association should not be overlooked and deserves attention. Unfortunately, in the last few years, the report has been dismissed by many as overly simplistic and less than helpful in fully assessing the air quality status and progress in areas with mature air pollution control programs, such as San Joaquin Valley. The report does assign the same air quality score to San Joaquin Valley as it does to some of the more pristine areas in California, such as San Luis Obispo, Ventura, Shasta, El Dorado, Placer and Nevada counties. For those who understand the severity of air quality challenges in the San Joaquin Valley, this anomaly is enough to totally dismiss the report and its scoring methodology.

“We are encouraging residents to understand what this report contains, and what it doesn’t,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “Despite a simplistic methodology, this report contains important information that deserves careful review and analysis. “

Given the significant level of effort that the American Lung Association expends on compiling and distributing this report, we should take the time to carefully consider this report and ensure that the public fully understands what it does -- and does not -- communicate. Toward that end, the following information would be useful to consider as it relates to the San Joaquin Valley:

- The report does illustrate that the challenges faced in San Joaquin Valley are unmatched by other regions in California. Due to the Valley’s geography and topography, a much smaller amount of air pollution in the Valley causes more violations of the federal air quality standards than any other region in California. This indicates that Valley’s need for resources and tools to address health problems associated with air pollution is much greater than many other regions.
- Although the report’s title is 2011 State of the Air, it does not look beyond 2009 in measuring air quality progress. This overlooks great improvements in air quality in the Valley in recent years. In fact, the winters in 2009-10 and 2010-11 were the cleanest on record.

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- Fresno and Bakersfield are identified among air pollution-challenged metropolitan areas with most-improved ozone scores.
- Three of the four cities in California with noted improvements in particulate pollution are in the Valley: Fresno, Visalia and Modesto.
- A more up-to-date look at actual air quality data shows that Valley counties are among the most improved regions with the greatest percentage reduction in “Unhealthy” air quality days, defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Tulare (90 percent reduction); Fresno (83 percent reduction); Merced (83 percent reduction); the Valley air basin portion of Kern (79 percent reduction); Madera (78 percent reduction); and Kings (72 percent reduction).
- Counties in California with fewer than five “Unhealthy” days in 2010 include Madera, Merced and Stanislaus.
- Other significant improvements in the Valley air basin – while not reported in the national report -- include an 80 percent reduction in stationary source emissions that form ozone and particulate matter, new records for clean winter air over the past two years and the cleanest summer on record in 2010, as measured against the federal 8-hour ozone standard.

Other factors in the ALA report that need to be noted include:

- The report uses measurements from a single air monitoring station to represent air quality in the vast, 25,000-square mile San Joaquin Valley or 6,000 square-mile Fresno County, much of which have relatively clean air.
- The disproportionate representation of air quality readings from one county, while the air basin comprises 25,000 square miles and eight counties.
- More than 2,000 wildfires in the Valley and areas ringing the Valley in summer of 2008, which severely impacted the Valley’s air quality and public health. EPA acknowledges the uncontrollable nature of these natural events, yet that is not reflected in the national report.
- The anomaly with respect to wildfires is not representative for use in portraying typical air quality trends in the Valley: However, the report indicates that wildfires can be the source of the most significant impact on public health from air pollution, which can overwhelm all efforts to reduce man-made air pollution. This signifies the need for better policies at the local, state and federal level for the management and reduction of wildfires.

While the Valley continues to face unique, natural challenges to clean air because of its geography, topography and meteorology, Valley air officials emphasize that the air basin has experienced its cleanest winters on record and cleanest summer over the past two years, as well as attainment of the federal PM10 standard (particulate matter 10 microns and smaller). They attribute these remarkable improvements to regulatory success, public compliance and technological advancements, as well as a robust grants program that distributed \$112 million in 2010-11 to virtually every sector of the Valley, including the critical transportation sector.

The Air District has included the following graphs to augment the national report in order to clarify specific air quality trends.

Exceedances of the 8-hr Ozone Standard (75 ppb) with wildfire data from 2008



Exceedances of the 8-hr Ozone Standard (75 ppb) without wildfire data from 2008

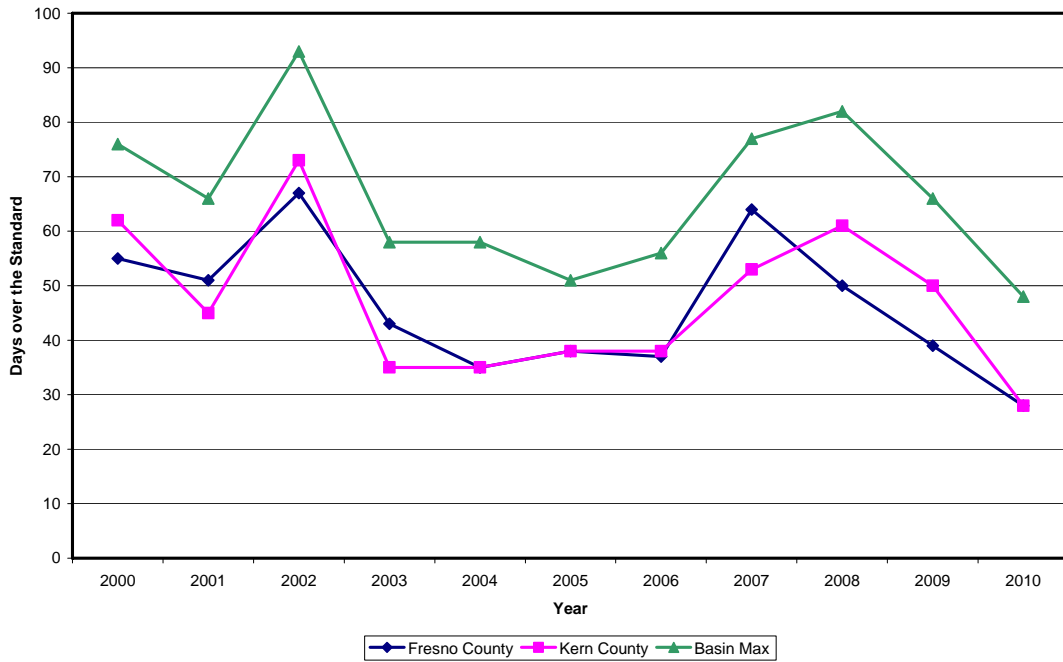


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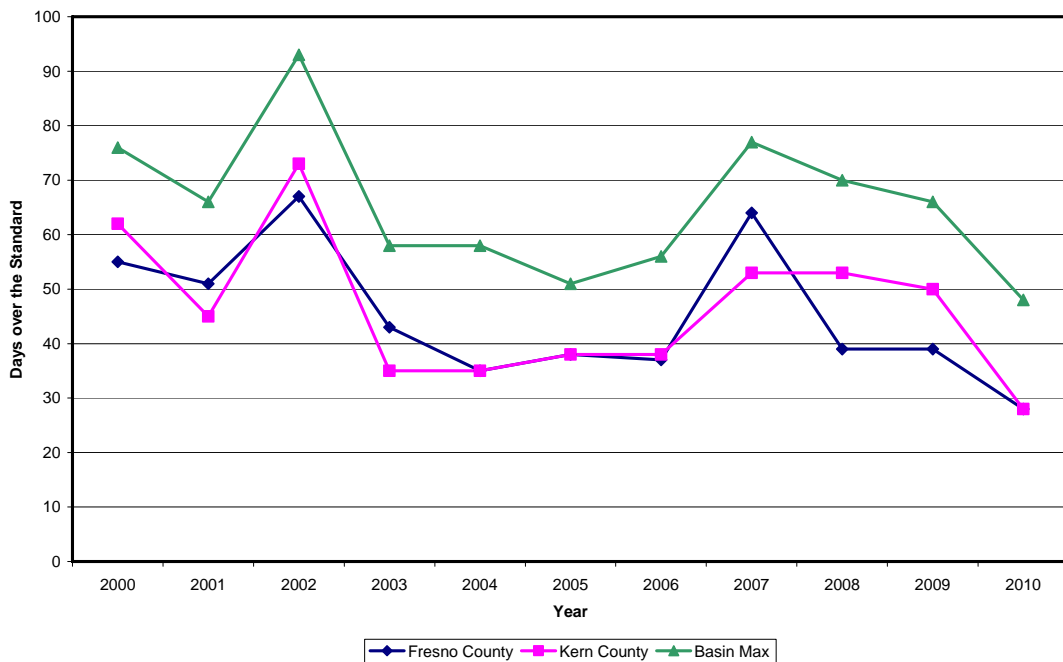
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Exceedances of the 24-hr PM2.5 Standard (35 ug/m3) with wildfire data from 2008



Exceedances of the 24-hr PM2.5 Standard (35 ug/m3) without wildfire data from 2008



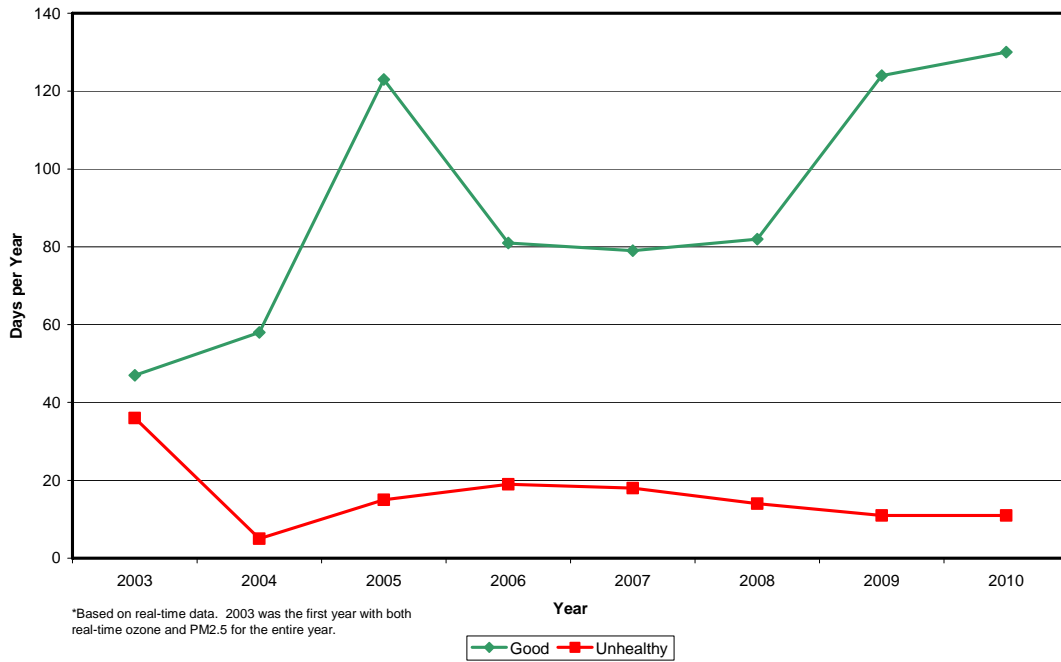
The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern. Visit www.valleyair.org to learn more.

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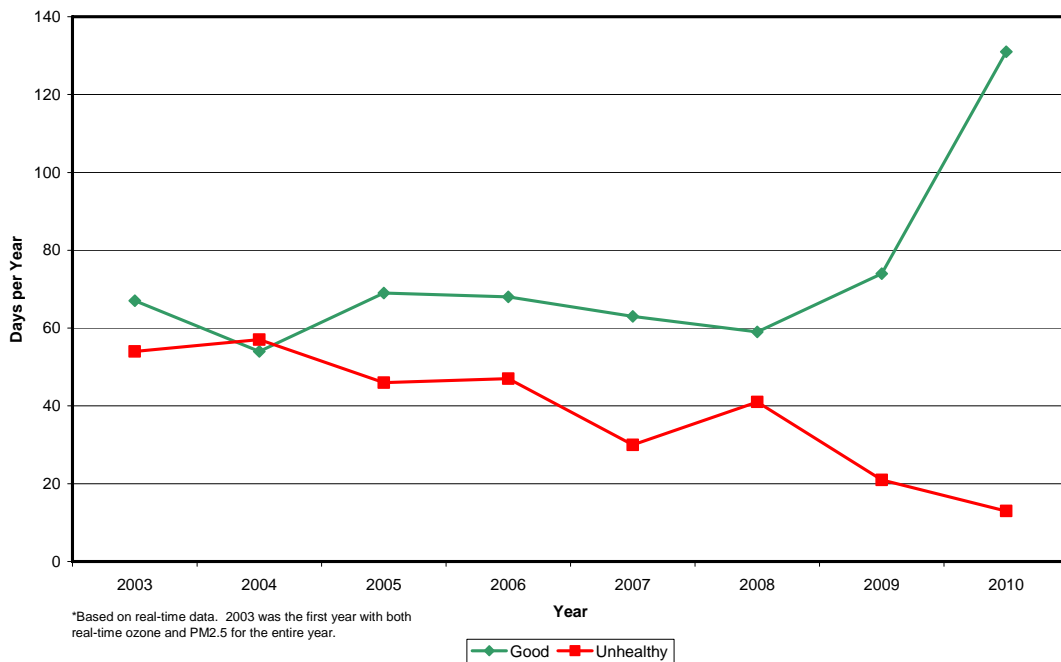
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Fresno County Good and Unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) Day Trends



Kern County Good and Unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) Day Trends



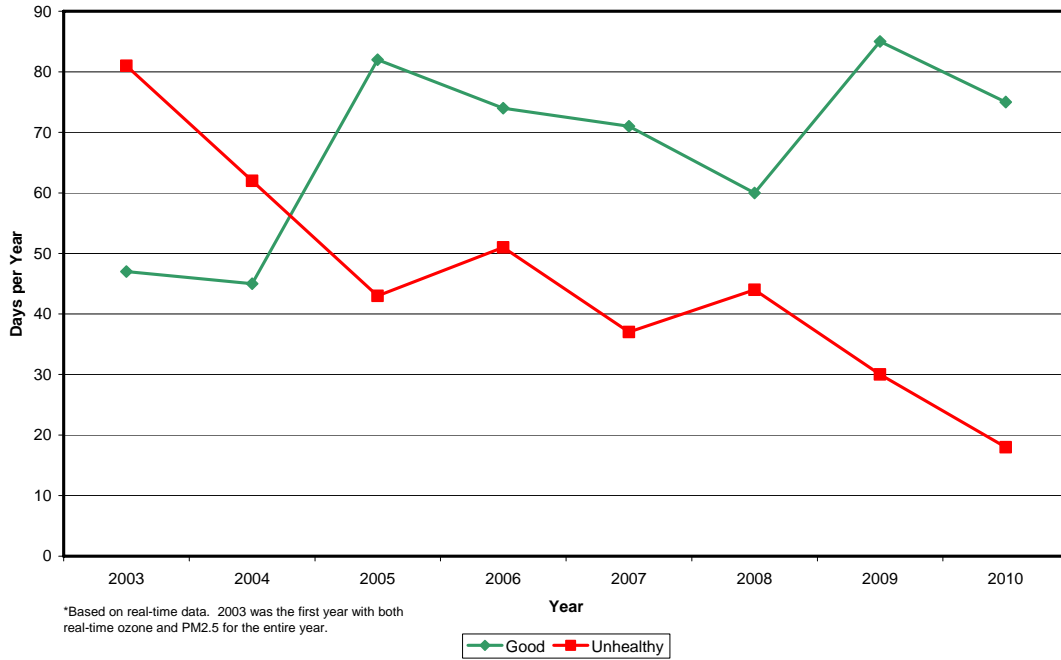
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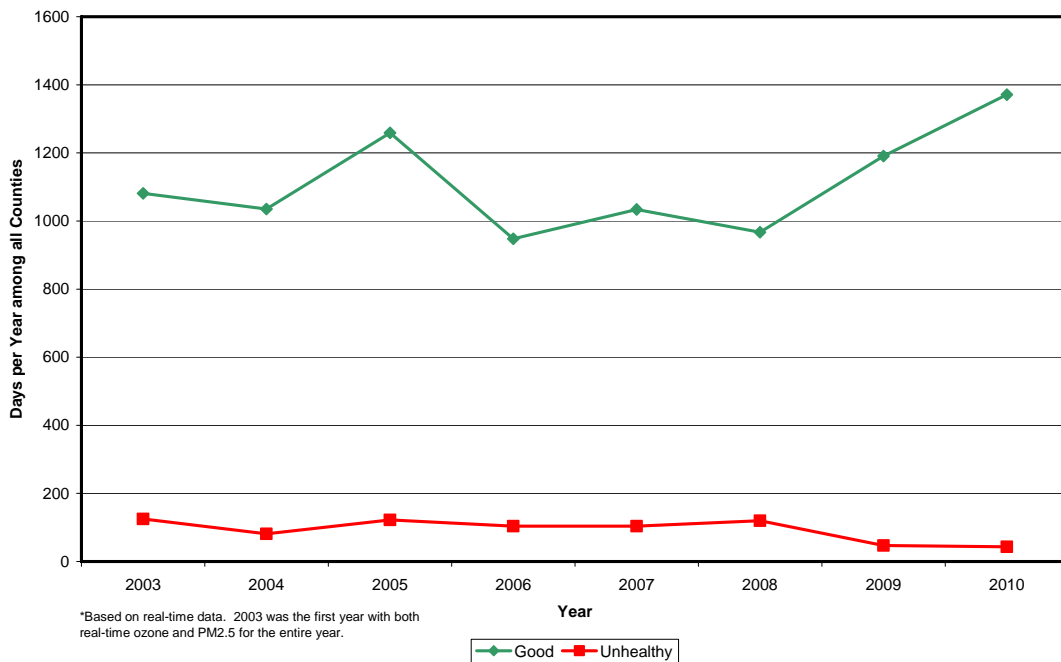
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SJV Basin-wide Maximum Good and Unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) Day Trends



County-Day Good and Unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) Day Trends



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