

Blowing dust prompts health advisory for Kings County

By Diana Aguilera

In the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Sunday, Nov. 3, 2013

Gusty winds and blowing dust have prompted Valley air officials to issue a health cautionary statement for Kings County through Monday evening.

Blowing dust can result in unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis and increase risk of respiratory infections, officials said. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality.

For more information, visit valleyair.org or call the district office in Fresno at (559) 230-6000.

Air Board starts 'Check Before You Burn' program

Taft Midway Driller, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013

The Valley's Check Before you burn program, which bans the use of home fireplaces and other wood fires on certain days, begins its 11th season on Nov. 1.

Check Before You Burn, which has resulted in historically clean wintertime air quality in the Valley, continues through February. The Valley Air District calls this wood-burning curtailment program a critical tool in minimizing harmful particulate pollution.

"The understanding and cooperation of the Valley's residents has made this regulation the single-most cost-effective regulation on record in the air basin," said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "It's a matter of public health."

During Check Before You Burn season, the Air District issues a daily wood-burning forecast by county: either "Please Burn Cleanly" or "Wood-burning Prohibited." When wood burning is prohibited, burning any solid fuel is not allowed. A forecast of "Please Burn Cleanly" urges residents to use manufactured fire logs or dry, seasoned wood. And of course, gas fireplace use is always allowed.

There are two exceptions to wood-burning prohibitions, however: If the residence does not have another source of heat or if the residence does not have access to natural-gas service (even if propane is used).

Using a fireplace or any wood-burning device – insert, stove or pellet stove – on a prohibited day without an exemption will result in a fine.

Daily wood-burning forecasts are available each day at 4:30 p.m. at <http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>, by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463), by subscribing to a free daily email at <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>, or by downloading a free iPhone app called "Valley Air" from the App Store or iTunes.

For more information about the Air District or Check Before You Burn, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office: in Fresno at 559-230-6000, in Modesto at 209-557-6400 or in Bakersfield at 661-326-6900.

Wood-burning rules now in effect

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013

With crisper fall days in the forecast, San Joaquin Valley air quality officials say residents need to check before lighting up a fireplace blaze.

The Valley Air Pollution Control District's annual wood-burning program begins today. On days with high levels of tiny particle pollution in the atmosphere, the district may prohibit residents from lighting a fire.

Those who ignore the prohibition can be fined.

Check before you burn

How the wood-burning restrictions work:

- On days when pollution is high, it is illegal to burn any solid fuel in your fireplace or any kind of stove. That includes manufactured fire logs. Gas fireplaces are OK.
- Burning wood is allowed if there is no other source of heat available or if there is no access to natural gas service.
- Wood-burning forecasts are issued at 4:30 p.m. each preceding day. To find out if it will be legal to burn, visit valleyair.org or call (800) 766-4463.

This should sound familiar by now. The program is in its 11th year. San Joaquin County typically saw very few burning prohibitions, however, until 2008-09 when stricter standards were put in place.

Last winter, burning was prohibited 21 times in the county, compared with a record 29 times the previous winter.

Air quality officials have discussed further tightening the standard, which could roughly double the number of no-burn days here. A spokesman said the district will revisit the rule next year, but for this winter, at least, the program remains the same.

Eighty-four people in San Joaquin County received notices of violation last year for lighting up on a no-burn day.

But district officials credit public cooperation for making the rule one of the most cost-effective at reducing harmful pollution.

"It's a matter of public health," Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director, said in a prepared statement.

Free emissions test offered to Fresno drivers

By Brianna Vaccari

In the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Valley CAN will provide Fresno drivers with free vehicle emissions tests Saturday at the Fresno County Fairgrounds during the "Tune In & Tune Up" event.

Drivers who have owned their car for at least six months are eligible for the free test from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. If the vehicle doesn't pass the test and can be repaired, the driver will receive a voucher for up to \$500 in emission-related repairs. The vouchers are valid at participating STAR-certified smog check stations.

Admission to the event will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Free food and drinks will be available beginning at 9 a.m. while supplies last. The event is subject to close early due to maximum vehicle capacity. For more information, email TITUEvent@valley-can.or or call 1-800-806-2004.

'Check Before You Burn' will begin today

The Madera Tribune, Friday, Nov. 1, 2013

The Valley's most important regulation for wintertime air-pollution reduction begins its 11th season today.

Check Before You Burn, which has resulted in historically clean wintertime air quality in the Valley, continues through February.

This wood burning curtailment program is a critical tool in minimizing harmful particulate pollution, air officials said.

The understanding and cooperation of the Valley's residents has made this regulation the single-most cost-effective regulation on record in the air basin," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director and air pollution control officer. "It's a matter of public health."

During Check Before You Burn season, the air district issues a daily wood burning forecast by county: either "Please Burn Cleanly" or "Wood-burning Prohibited." When wood burning is prohibited, burning any solid fuel is not allowed. A forecast of "Please Burn Cleanly" urges residents to use manufactured fire logs or dry, seasoned wood. And of course, gas fireplaces are always allowed.

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Visalia police wheel out electric motorcycles

By Lewis Griswold, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013

VISALIA -- Police unveiled two quiet additions to the department's two-wheeled fleet Thursday: environmentally friendly, zero-emission electric motorcycles.

Visalia, Farmersville and McFarland are the first cities in the San Joaquin Valley to buy zero emission electric motorcycles, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said.

The 2013 Zero DS 8.5 models are made by Zero Motorcycles, a Santa Cruz-area company. They cost \$19,000 each and were purchased with a grant from the air district.

"It'll reduce our carbon footprint," police fleet manager Dexter Valencia said.

The motorcycles can reach 100 mph, have a range of 90 miles and under normal use will go several hours without recharging. Recharging involves plugging into a 110-volt outlet.

The motorcycles won't replace the department's Harley-Davidson motorcycles, but will be used to patrol parks or at parades where a quieter, lighter-weight machine is useful, or as a backup when a Harley is in the shop for maintenance, Sgt. Chris McLain said.

"They're more suitable to uneven terrain," he said. "They have a stealth-like capacity."