

Aspen fire causes officials to issue health cautionary statement

Staff reports

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, July 30, 2013

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a health cautionary statement for smoke impact in the foothill and mountain areas of Merced, Madera, Fresno and Tulare counties because of the Aspen Fire burning near Huntington Lake.

The caution is in place until the fire is extinguished, the pollution district said.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter that can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, the air pollution district said. People with heart or lung diseases should follow doctor's advice for dealing with particulate exposure.

Reported on July 22, the Aspen fire is 20 percent contained and has burned 11,019 acres. The fire is burning north of Big Creek in the Sierra National Forest in Fresno County. Lightning is believed to have started the fire.

Information: www.valleyair.org or 230-6000.

PG&E to blow up rest of power plant

By John Cox, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thurs., July 25, 2013

If explosives and large-scale demolition jobs are your idea of entertainment, get ready for a big show in Bakersfield early next month.

But you'll have to get up early on a Saturday to see it.

At about 5 a.m. on Aug. 3, Pacific Gas and Electric Co. plans to bring down the last standing structure at the old Kern Power Plant west of Coffee Road just south of Rosedale Highway.

The San Francisco-based utility is working with Bakersfield police to shut down a portion of Coffee Road that morning. There is expected to be minimal impact on Rosedale Highway traffic.

Next week, the company plans to notify neighbors about the event so that they are not frightened by the resulting boom. PG&E said it is still trying to determine how far the sound will travel, and so it has not yet decided how widely to spread word of the event.

"We're working to make sure that we notify everybody early next week," PG&E spokesman Denny Boyles said.

The implosion of the plant's boiler building is expected to be the dramatic finale of a demolition job that, to this point, has not involved explosives. Four 140-foot-tall smokestacks and four steel fuel tanks were torn down at the 120-acre site last month, and the plant's former turbine building was toppled in December.

Boyles said the company is making accommodations for people who want to view the demolition. Those plans have not yet been disclosed.

The power plant closed for good in 1995 after operating from 1948 to 1985, when it went on "standby" status.

Environmental remediation of the site is expected to continue into next year. That work became necessary when soil testing found the site had been contaminated by metals and petroleum.

A San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District spokeswoman stated in an email Thursday that the agency does not expect the demolition to present "any significant air quality issues."

Even so, she said the district is reviewing PG&E's plans to make sure there is no asbestos present during the demolition. She added that although the implosion is exempt from the

agency's fugitive dust rules, the company's post-demolition clean up job is subject to such rules, and that PG&E will have to limit "visible dust."

The demolition is part of PG&E's preparations to sell the site for redevelopment.