

[Fresno Bee Earth Log, Friday, Jan. 3, 2014:](#)

Can you 'clean burn' on a no-burn day? No way

By Mark Grossi

In the midst of another soot siege, the question arises: What does "clean burning" in your fireplace mean? And can you do it even when the local air district bans burning for the day?

The short answer: No, you can't burn any kind of wood, pellets or manufactured logs, such as Duraflame, when the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District prohibits burning your county.

Clean burning applies only to days when burning is allowed. And it isn't a requirement. It's a suggestion from the air district.

The authorities would prefer it if you used a federally certified wood-burning stove or similar device. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says manufactured logs burn cleaner.

If you check the Air District's page today, you'll see burning is banned throughout the eight counties on the Valley floor.

There are exceptions. If you don't have access to natural gas or if you have no other way to heat your home except wood burning, you qualify for an exception.

Poor air quality triggers health concerns in San Joaquin Valley

By Diana Aguilera, Fresno Bee staff writer

Also in the Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Jan. 3, 2014

Hazardous soot levels continued Friday afternoon in the San Joaquin Valley, prompting air district officials to urge residents to curtail outdoor activities amid rising numbers of people reporting breathing problems.

As of 1 p.m. Friday, the air was rated unhealthy for Fresno, Tulare, Kings and Kern counties and unhealthy for sensitive groups for Madera County, said Errol Villegas, a program manager for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Soot levels peaked at very unhealthy on Friday in some of the counties.

Sooty air created from fireplaces, diesel engines, cars and other sources has hung aloft in the Valley for weeks, affecting residents -- even those with no previous lung problems. Children, senior citizens and those with sensitive lungs are more vulnerable to the pollution, Villegas said.

The air district urges the public to check its hourly updates online and stay indoors as much as possible. District officials predict the stagnant weather will stick around for at least a few more days but said there may be some relief on the way.

"Forecasters predict a weather front by Tuesday or Wednesday that may help flush out the pollution," Villegas said. "We're keeping our fingers crossed."

A low-pressure system is forecast for the Valley by midweek with winds gusting up to 10 to 15 mph, enough to break the high-pressure inversion, said Gary Sanger, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford. The arriving weather system may improve the air quality but may also trigger blowing dust and a 10% chance of rain in Fresno, he said.

The air district has prohibited wood burning in fireplaces for the majority of the Valley. People who violate no-burn orders could be cited and fined. About 121 notices of violation had been written in Fresno County as of Thursday; more than 365 notices have been written throughout the Valley.

Doctors in Fresno are seeing the consequences of the bad air, with a growing number of patients complaining of coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath. Dr. John Gasman, a pulmonologist at Kaiser Permanent Medical Center-Fresno, said the number of people with asthma, chronic pulmonary obstructive disease and other lung diseases are increasing as the pollution siege continues.

"The poor air quality is engulfing more people," Gasman said.

With persistent foul air, even people with healthy lungs are showing symptoms, he said, including shortness of breath, coughing and burning eyes, and burning throat.

The poor air quality prompted schools to cancel some outdoor activities. Roosevelt High School canceled its girls varsity soccer match against visiting Firebaugh on Friday afternoon.