

No wood burning tonight thanks to new rules

Stockton Record, Wednesday, November 5, 2014

Today is San Joaquin County's first no-burn day under a new, more aggressive program to reduce wintertime pollution, perhaps the strictest such program in the nation, officials announced Tuesday.

No burning in fireplaces or stoves is allowed unless residents have registered those devices with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Only relatively new, clean devices will be accepted.

For those who cannot burn, the number of no-burn days is expected to rise, on average, from about 24 days per year to 53 days per year under the stricter program. That's because officials decided to lower the pollution threshold for declaring a no-burn day.

However, those who register their fireplaces or wood stoves — or upgrade to newer and cleaner methods in order to register — may be allowed to burn virtually all winter.

That's one carrot to persuade people to burn cleaner. The other carrot is that the air district has also significantly increased financial incentives, making it possible for residents to upgrade to a cleaner unit for roughly 50 percent of the regular cost.

To determine if you can register the unit you already have, visit valleyair.org and look under "Check Before You Burn" for a list of devices certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

That same website has details about how to take advantage of the financial incentives to upgrade. And it will be regularly updated throughout the winter to inform the public on which days burning is allowed and on which days it is banned.

Wood-burning restrictions announced

By Staff

Porterville Recorder, Tuesday, Nov. 04, 2014

TULARE COUNTY - The first wood-burning curtailment of the season is in effect today in Tulare County. Only registered wood-burning devices may be used, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The mandatory curtailment is in effect due to poor air quality that will be in place through midnight Tuesday. The restriction applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured fire logs in unregistered residential fireplaces, stoves and inserts, as well as outdoor burning devices such as fire pits and chimineas.

Daily wood-burning status reports are issued by county. Residents can visit www.valleyair.org/CBYB daily to see if restrictions for their county are in place.

[Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star Editorial, Wednesday, November 5, 2014](#)

Our View: New burning rules irksome, but will save lives

Who doesn't love a crackling wood fire on a cold day? Answer: People with asthma, allergies and heart conditions.

So while many of us – if not most of us – love the smell of burning almond or oak and the sight of flickering flames, the right thing to do is to comply with the San Joaquin Valley's new wood-burning regulations.

The new rules are expected to shut down most wood burning in fireplaces, older stoves and inserts from Nov.1 to Feb.28. These fireplaces and older heaters create more than 90 percent of the Valley's soot pollution. The only exceptions during this time will be when a storm scours harmful pollution out of the air.

We wish the rules – some say they are the toughest in the country – weren't necessary. But our Valley's unique pollution-retaining shape and federal health standards leave us with no other options.

We live in the dirtiest air basin on the West Coast – even dirtier than Los Angeles. And soot is one of the most dangerous aspects of that dirty air. On winter days, soot can amount to about a third of the particle pollution in many of our neighborhoods. You can literally see it in the air.

Some folks are bound to be angry with the rule. They'll view it as an infringement of their freedom – another example of California nanny-state politics. But if they think about a loved one coughing all winter or dying prematurely because hundreds of neighbors burn wood in the fireplace all winter, they might change their tune. It is that serious.

Good neighbors respect and support each other. Sacrificing the ambiance of hearth and logs is a small price for significantly improving somebody's health.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is backing the rules with a carrot-and-stick approach. Homeowners can get up to \$1,500 for certified inserts, which can cost up to \$5,000 or more. Applicants who qualify as low-income can get up to \$2,500. Another \$500 is available for those who are converting to natural gas, which is exempt from all restrictions because it burns so cleanly. That's the carrot.

The stick is a crackdown on violators. Fines start at \$50 and can climb as high as \$1,000 for repeat offenders.

Oddly, Stanislaus County, nearer the supposedly cleaner north end of the Valley where there is more air flow, has some of the dirtiest air. Stanislaus residents can anticipate 70 no-burn days in the coming season. Neighbors San Joaquin and Merced counties have the cleanest air, according to the air board's estimates. San Joaquin will have 53 no-burn days; Merced will have 55. The dirtiest air is in Fresno County (79) and Kern (73).

Regardless of this anomaly, the air board is serious – and it should be. The new rules could help thousands of people breathe more easily this winter and even save lives, district officials say.

One of those spared might be someone you know.