

## **Another \$2 million available for upgrading stoves, inserts**

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Friday, Nov. 14, 2014

Having burned through almost \$2 million — and quite rapidly — air regulators approved another \$2 million on Thursday for residents willing to upgrade to cleaner-burning stoves or gas inserts.

Demand has been high. Generally speaking, the new incentives are large enough to slash by 50 percent what many Valley residents would otherwise have to pay for a new stove or gas insert.

The additional money comes just two months after the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District approved strict new rules significantly reducing the number of days on which people can use traditional open fireplaces or older stoves.

While tightening the rules, the district simultaneously began offering much larger incentives for those willing to upgrade to cleaner units. Those incentives are \$1,500 toward wood or pellet devices and \$2,000 for natural gas. Low-income residents can get another \$500 off.

Residents in San Joaquin County alone have sought more than half a million dollars in incentives, the second-highest demand in the eight-county region.

“It’s a great story to tell,” said San Joaquin County Supervisor Bob Elliott, who sits on the air district’s Board of Directors. “If we have a good program and we provide the incentives, this just goes to show people will respond and respond positively.”

Up to 100 applications for incentives have been coming in every day, said the air district’s executive director, Seyed Sadredin.

“All of us were hoping we would run out of money quickly,” Sadredin told the board Thursday. “I’m here to report that we have.”

Sadredin alluded to the possibility of making even more money available later if demand remains high.

The money is being redirected from a separate incentive program for clean trucks, a program that is no longer necessary, Sadredin said. The air district offers a range of incentive programs funded at least in part by fees collected from polluting businesses.

Those who choose to upgrade will then have to register their new stoves or inserts with the district, a process that starting next year will involve paying a \$12.50 fee every three years and having those units inspected by a professional.

In San Joaquin County, those who upgrade will be able to burn most, if not all, winter days, while those who have older units will be subject to about 53 no-burn days over the course of an average winter.

## **Drought and Warm Temperatures Cause Unusual Spike in Central Valley Air Pollution**

By Sasha Khokha

The California Report, Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014

I’ve been fighting bronchitis, and my cough just won’t seem to go away. My doctor has put me on a nebulizer to help open up my lungs — in part because breathing outside in the Central Valley over the last week has been tough on everyone’s lungs.

You can see, and taste, the thick, soupy haze in the air. Check out the video below if you want to see it for yourself.

The main culprit is PM 2.5, tiny particles of soot, chemicals and debris that can burrow deep into the lungs, causing breathing problems, heart attacks and even strokes. Scary stuff.

Some of the particles are so small that several thousand of them could fit on the period at the end of this sentence. The kind of PM 2.5 we’re seeing right now is formed when gasses from tailpipe emissions and other sources react with sunlight and water vapor.

Hourly readings of PM 2.5 on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's real-time monitoring website have been hovering in the red (unhealthy) and purple (extremely unhealthy) zones since last week, sometimes reaching levels three times higher than the average daily federal health standard.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says unusually warm temperatures for November — and the ongoing drought — are to blame.

"Low overnight temperatures, high afternoon temperatures, so the inversion layer is getting fairly close to the ground overnight. It's mushing all that pollution down," says the air district's Jaime Holt.

"Extreme stagnation, long dry spells, with very little air movement," adds Samir Sheikh, deputy air pollution control officer. "Just the perfect conditions for PM 2.5 to form in the atmosphere."

Air district officials have been asking residents not to burn their fireplaces and commuters to shorten trips and not idle their cars at drive-thrus. But air quality activists says the air district needs to publicly ask schools to cancel athletic events, too.

"Schools usually keep their kids in from recess, from PE because of the air quality, but after school, they're not really following their recommendations anymore," says Dolores Weller, of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition. "The air district does need to give some stronger recommendations based on protecting kids' health."

That's a critique that air quality activists have been making for a long time: the health message about air quality isn't getting out there to the public.

At last weekend's Fresno State football game against San Jose State, the haze was so thick it was hard to see across the stadium. But fans showed up anyway. You can check out a video of the smoggy stadium here.

Participation in the real-time air monitoring program is voluntary for schools. The San Joaquin Valley air district says it does warn schools when air pollution spikes, but it doesn't have the authority to stop school events.

"We do want to keep this relationship open with the schools. What we don't want them to feel is that we are coming down with a hammer on them in such a way that it makes them not want to participate in the [air-monitoring] program at all," says the Air District's Jaime Holt.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, Nov. 14, 2014:](#)

### **Work together for clean air**

Thank you very much for your coverage of the extremely poor air quality in the Valley and the importance of measures to reduce air pollution from sources such as wood burning, cars, trucks, buses and agricultural sources.

The American Lung Association in California warns residents that breathing particle pollution or soot can shorten life and send those most at risk to the emergency room. Fine particles in smoke and diesel pollution are so small they can bypass the airway defenses and enter directly into the lung and bloodstream and can lead to lung disease and heart attacks.

Soot pollution is linked to increases in hospitalizations and emergency room visits. One fireplace or wood burning stove can produce levels of smoke in a neighborhood that exceed federal air quality standards and affect many neighborhoods. With stagnant air in the Valley, this pollution builds up to create hazardous conditions for everyone.

There are many things that residents can do to improve air quality, including burning less, driving cleaner vehicles, taking transit and supporting a strong Fresno General Plan with more transportation choices. Let's all work together to clean up air pollution so everyone can breathe easier.

*Praveen Buddiga, MD, Fresno*