

Air alerts still in effect from Tracy fire

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Health cautions remained in place Wednesday because of a large biomass fire in Tracy that is sending smoke beyond San Joaquin County into Stanislaus and Merced counties.

Piles of wood are burning at the Tracy Storage Facility for Agra Marketing of Chico, the Tracy Press reported. The fire began Monday.

The fire is being managed by state and local fire officials. The cautions from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will remain in effect until the fire is extinguished.

Smoke from fires produces fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks, and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, according to the air district. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with particulate exposure. Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on local conditions.

People with respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air district officials urge residents to follow doctors' orders when exposed to fire emissions.

An employee at the Sylvan Union School District office in Modesto said the district follows the Real-Time Air Advisory Network, or RAAN, that the air district has online at www.valleyair.org/raan. When air is considered unhealthy, students are kept indoors during recess.

At Sherwood Elementary on Rumble Road, for example, Tuesday began with a yellow flag hung at the school, meaning moderate air quality, said staff secretary Janis Schott. But later in the morning, when the smoke made the air quality unhealthy, the red flag was hung and kids were kept indoors. As of midmorning Wednesday, the RAAN reading was moderate and the yellow flag was hung at the school.

The air district says school employees who see or smell the smoke near their campuses should keep students inside per the RAAN guidelines for Level 5 conditions at www.valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/documents/RAAN-AQ-activity-guidance-chart.pdf.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the air district office in Modesto at (209) 557-6400.

Fire darkens Tracy sky

Glenn Moore, Tracy Press

In the Patterson Irrigator, Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Smoke billowing from a compost fire burning north of Tracy for a third day triggered a health warning Tuesday and Wednesday from the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District.

Piles of wood started that started burning Monday at the Tracy Storage Facility for Agra Marketing of Chico, 20400 S. Tracy Blvd., have sent brown smoke drifting over north Tracy.

The caution covers northern San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties, with emphasis on communities in Lathrop and Manteca. Winds have driven the smoke to the east and southeast since it began.

The health advisory from the air pollution district states that smoke from the biomass fire contains fine particulate matter that could cause serious health problems, including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risks of heart attack or stroke.

The advisory cautions older adults and younger children to avoid prolonged exposure to the smoke or heavy exertion, depending on local conditions.

The warning will stay in effect until the fire is put out.

According to Tracy Little League Vice President Chris Hewitt on Wednesday, the compost fire will not affect games at Legacy Fields — across Tracy Boulevard from Agra Marketing — as long as the smoke keep blowing to the east, away from the little league fields.

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Staff Report

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