

Wildfires cause issues for Valley air quality

Turlock Journal, Saturday, August 13, 2016

Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District have issued a health advisory for area residents because of smoke from two wildfires.

The Air District said the smoke from the Soberanes Fire burning in Monterey County is affecting air quality in locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley while smoke from the Mineral Fire in Fresno County is affecting air quality on the western edge of the Valley near the Coalinga foothills.

The wildfires burning around the Valley coupled with high heat and a strong high pressure system lingering over the Valley are causing smoke emissions to remain trapped within the air basin and spikes in particulate matter levels and ozone levels are possible, particularly during the afternoon hours.

“The businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health.”

Air officials are expecting these poor air quality conditions to continue into next week based on the projected weather conditions and impacts from these wildfires will continue to be a concern until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from wildfires produces particulate matter and contributes to the creation of ozone, which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air District officials urge residents to follow their doctors’ orders when exposed to wildfire emissions and stay indoors if at all possible.

The Air District’s Real-time Air Advisory Network is designed to detect the fine particulates that exist in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by the monitors. An area may be experiencing impacts from these wildfires while the monitor reflects a moderate reading. If a person can see or smell smoke or ash, that is an indication that the air quality conditions should be treated as unhealthy and people should remain indoors.

Residents can check the District’s wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

Wildfires impacting Valley air quality

The Porterville Recorder, Saturday, August 13, 2016

The public may experience poor air quality this weekend and should take action to protect their health, according to air district officials.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District reported Friday that smoke from the Soberanes Fire burning in Monterey County is affecting air quality in locations throughout the Valley. Smoke from the Mineral Fire in Fresno County is also affecting air quality on the western edge of the Valley near the Coalinga foothills.

The elevated particulate matter and ozone levels throughout the Valley prompted air district officials to issue a health cautionary statement Valley-wide.

The wildfires burning around the Valley coupled with high heat and a strong high-pressure system have resulted in smoke emissions remaining trapped within the air basin.

Officials warned spikes in particulate matter and ozone levels are possible, especially during the afternoon hours.

“The businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work,” said Seyed Sadredin, district executive director. “However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health.”

Air officials are expecting poor air quality conditions to continue into next week based on the projected weather conditions.

Impacts from the wildfires will continue to be a concern until the fires are extinguished, according to officials.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a district office in Fresno 230-6000, Modesto 209-557-6400 or Bakersfield 661-381-1809.

Wildfires elsewhere prompt health alert in Valley

Modesto Bee, Saturday, August 13, 2016

If you have seen the haze in the Northern San Joaquin Valley in recent days, it will come as no surprise that health officials issued a warning that the air is bad.

Smoke is drifting into the area from the Soberanes Fire in Monterey County. As of Friday, that fire had consumed 70,615 acres and was only 55 percent contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. An illegal campfire sparked the blaze last month, officials said.

The lower part of the Valley is faring no better, with smoke drifting in from the Mineral Fire in Fresno County. That fire, burning near Coalinga, has consumed more than 7,000 acres and was 35 percent contained, Cal Fire said Friday.

In addition to the hazy conditions, that smoke causes elevated particulate matter. That, along with high ozone levels throughout the area, prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue a health cautionary statement Valley-wide on Friday morning.

“The businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work,” Seyed Sadredin, the district’s executive director, said in a news release. “However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health.”

The higher-than-normal temperatures the area has been experiencing only exacerbate matters. And there is no end in sight to the heat. National Weather Service forecasters predict highs in the triple-digits through the weekend in Modesto, dropping to the upper 90s early next week. The strong high-pressure system lingering over the Valley is causing smoke emissions to remain trapped within the air basin and spikes in particulate-matter levels and ozone levels are possible, particularly during the afternoon hours, the district said.

Authorities said they expect the poor air quality conditions to continue “into next week, based on the projected weather conditions, and impacts from these wildfires will continue to be a concern until the fires are extinguished.”

Smoke polluting Kings County air

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, August 12, 2016

HANFORD — Several fires burning around the San Joaquin Valley are bringing smoke into Kings County and causing breathing problems for people with respiratory issues.

Perhaps the biggest contributor of smoke is the massive Soberanes fire in Monterey County that continues to burn weeks after it started.

At last check, the fire had burned more than 70,000 acres and was 55 percent contained despite thousands of firefighters trying to douse it for weeks.

On the Valley's western side, the Mineral Fire near Coalinga is degrading air quality in areas near the Coalinga foothills.

At last check, the fire was 7,050 acres and 35 percent contained.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials are expecting these poor air quality conditions to continue into next week based on projections for continued triple digit temperatures caused by a high pressure system that is also trapping smoke in the Valley.

Officials are cautioning people with health issues to be aware of possible spikes in smoke particulate matter levels and ozone levels, particularly in the afternoon hours.

Air District: Wildfires in Fresno, Monterey counties impacting Valley air quality

The Business Journal, Friday, Aug. 12, 2016

Smoke from the Soberanes Fire burning in Monterey County is affecting air quality in locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley while smoke from the Mineral Fire in Fresno County is affecting air quality on the western edge of the Valley near the Coalinga foothills, according to the San Joaquin Valley Pollution Control District.

Elevated particulate matter and ozone levels throughout the Valley are prompting Air District officials to issue a health cautionary statement Valley-wide.

“The wildfires burning around the Valley coupled with high heat and a strong high pressure system lingering over the Valley are causing smoke emissions to remain trapped within the air basin and spikes in particulate matter levels and ozone levels are possible, particularly during the afternoon hours,” stated a press release issued by the Air District Friday morning.

“The businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director/air pollution control officer. “However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health.”

Air officials are expecting these poor air quality conditions to continue into next week based on the projected weather conditions and impacts from these wildfires will continue to be a concern until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from wildfires produces particulate matter (PM) and contributes to the creation of ozone, which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air District officials urge residents to follow their doctors’ orders when exposed to wildfire emissions and stay indoors if at all possible.

“Please be advised that the District’s Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM 2.5 which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke,” said Friday’s press release. “Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing impacts from these wildfires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash, that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as “Unhealthy” and remain indoors.”

Residents can check the District’s wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions.

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"The businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work," said Seyed Sadredin, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health."

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Air quality officials urge parents to be watchful as school year begins

By Tony Cabrera

KFSN-TV, ABC 30, Friday, August. 12, 2016

Fresno Unified gets back to school on Monday and that means thousands of drivers will be on the road to drop off and pick up their kids.

It's the time of year when emissions go up, which is why the Valley Air District is sending out a message. For many families, it's the start of a busy school year with drop offs, pick ups and everything in between. The increase in traffic has the Valley Air District encouraging people to change their habits, especially while waiting outside of campus.

"We're asking those parents to turn the key, turn that car off, be idle free, and avoid producing unnecessary emissions that those students will not only inhale, but will collectively make ozone increase in the valley," Heather Heinks with the district said.

Not only will heat play a factor, but, this year, wildfires in both Monterey and Fresno Counties are in the mix.

"It's definitely a double whammy," Heinks said. "We've got high ozone and increasing particulate matter." That's why she says it's important for people to do what they can, when possible.

"There are a lot of instances where we can just make that extra decision as parents and turn off our vehicles or come at a different time or even share a ride," Heinks said.

But in an exclusive Action News poll conducted by Survey USA. We found that 55 percent of parents in the greater Fresno area say their kids will be driven to school without a carpool, 35 percent will carpool, take a bus, walk or ride a bike.

If it's a reasonable option, some say they're all for it.

"If that helps the air quality, carpooling is always a good idea," parent Mick Henderson said. "Especially saving gas."

But waiting in a hot car with the AC off? Not so much.

"Especially during those days where it's 105 or more," Henderson said. "I've gotta have the AC blasting, but, I guess, it kind of depends on the heat."

And when convenience and family needs are at the top of the priority list, some say these ideas can fall by the wayside.

"As long as the air keeps circulating, we have rain, we have a new day," Dalia Mendez of Fresno said. "I don't think there's anything to worry about."