

More wildfire smoke pours into Valley

By Julissa Zavala

Porterville Recorder, Wednesday, September 21, 2016

Smoke from the Soberanes Fire in Monterey County and the Canyon Fire burning in Santa Barbara County is affecting air quality in locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley, including Porterville.

Unusually high particulate matter levels throughout the Valley are prompted Air District officials Tuesday to issue a health cautionary statement Valley-wide.

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

David Stector, meteorologist for the Weather Service in Hanford, said Wednesday will be partly cloudy with a low of 65 degrees and a high of 92 degrees, while Thursday will be mostly sunny with a low of 53 degrees and a high of 77 degrees.

The drop in temperature on Thursday, coinciding with the start of the Autumn Equinox, is due to a cold front coming through Wednesday night, Stector said.

Stector said it will remain cool for a couple days before rising again and resuming 90 degree weather next week. He said the forecast does not call for any more 100 degree days for the rest of the year.

The annual average of 100 degree days in Porterville is 15 days, but this year has more than doubled that amount with 36 days over 100 degrees. Monday's high was 105, while the high Tuesday was down to 97 degrees.

Summer was a little hotter than normal this year, Stector said, but September has been slightly cooler than normal for Porterville.

Stector said Porterville hasn't had any rainfall since June 12, but is still a little above normal for the year.

While a low pressure system approaching should reduce smoke impacts by Thursday, the public should exercise caution 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.

If smoke or ash is seen or smelled, that is an indication that residents should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" and remain indoors. The smell of smoke was so strong Monday night. Public safety dispatchers were swamped with calls from residents concerned with a fire in their neighborhood.

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 at www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

Crews are working to surround the Canyon wildfire on Vandenberg Air Force Base.

On Tuesday, the fire expanded to the south as it grew to more than 16 square miles. It is 18 percent contained.

Nearly 800 firefighters were deployed to corral the fire when it broke out Sunday in a remote canyon. The cause is under investigation.

The fire delayed the launch of a satellite on Monday.

Smoky air, smell due to Monterey County fire

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, September 21, 2016

An intense smoky smell that began settling over Kern County Monday evening is due to the Soberanes Fire in Monterey County, fire officials said.

A wind shift in the area and dense fog are pushing smoke into the county, Kern County fire officials said Tuesday. There is no fire in the area.

But that smoke pushed air quality to hazardous levels, prompting the Kern High School District to cancel all outdoor activities throughout Tuesday, KHSD Athletic Director Stan Greene said.

"There's no practice with football, no running or training, we canceled our tennis matches and rescheduled them for another date as a safety measure," Greene said. "There's no outdoor activity at all."

If air quality improves, football teams might be able to practice, Greene said, but it's not necessary. "We don't have to practice. It's not that important," he said.

Panama-Buena Vista Union School District and Bakersfield City School District also canceled outdoor activities Tuesday due to the air quality.

Emergency dispatchers received a large number of calls about smoke in the Lake Isabella area and on the valley floor, fire officials said.

Health warning issued

By the Associated Press

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, September 20, 2016

Smoke from two fires burning on the coast are expected to create poor air quality in the San Joaquin Valley. Unusually high particulate matter levels have prompted health alerts for everyone.

The elderly, young children, people with serious health problems including lung disease and asthma or other respiratory problems are urged to stay indoors if at all possible, according to the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District. Smoke from the fires is producing particulate matter, which contributes to the creation of ozone, which can cause lung disease, asthma attacks, an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Poor air quality is expected to continue through Wednesday, and possibly longer, depending on weather conditions. An approaching low pressure system could help by Thursday, but caution is advised as long as the fires are burning.

The District warns that its Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect fine particulates (called PM 2.5 which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that are in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by their monitors. Therefore an area may be affected by the 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.

The Soberanes Fire in Monterey County is 61 percent contained. It has burned nearly 114,000 acres and is causing smokey conditions in Carmel Valley and nearby areas. Most of the area the fire has burned is rugged and remote, but there are evacuations in effect in the Big Sur area. It is being called the nation's most costliest fire - so far, \$206.7 million has been spent fighting it. That eclipses the previous record of \$165 million, spent on the 2002 Biscuit Fire that burned in California and Oregon.

The Canyon Fire in Santa Barbara County on and near Vandenberg Airbase is the second fire that is most affecting air quality here. That fire has burned about 16 square miles and is 18 percent contained. That fire grew by 6,000 acres on Monday and is considered unpredictable but, according to a base Facebook page post by Col. Paul Nosek, the fire isn't threatening the space launch complex.

Wildfires pollute Valley air, again

By Sheyanne Romero

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2016

Tulare County residents were concerned by the smell of smoke and ash in the air Monday night.

Although there are no fires burning nearby, wind patterns are pushing smoke from fires burning to the north and south into Valley, according to air officials.

The Soberanes Fire in Monterey County and the Canyon Fire burning in Santa Barbara are impacting air quality, said Ana Stone of San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"If you see or smell smoke you shouldn't do strenuous or prolonged activities," Stone said.

Officials are expecting poor air quality to continue throughout the week, she added.

The most recent wildfire burning in southern California, the Canyon Fire, has destroyed more than 10,500 acres near Vandenberg Air Force base. The fire started late last week and is only 18 percent contained.

More than 600 firefighters from the Air Force base, U.S. Forestry, CAL FIRE and Santa Barbara County Fire Department are combating the growing blaze, according to Vandenberg officials.

Firefighters have been working nonstop to protect surrounding wildlife and watersheds being threatened by the growing flames.

Crews have described the fire as growing at a "slow to moderate speed".

Adding to the poor air, the Soberanes Fire has been burning for nearly two months. The fire has destroyed 113,259 acres in Monterey County. The wildfire is 61 percent contained, but controlled burning on the eastern edge of the fire has caused heavy smoke to be pushed toward the Valley.

Weather experts are predicting an approaching low-pressure system that will help improve air quality. However, residents should still be careful when exercising or playing outdoors.

"Smoke from the wildfires has produced large particulate matter," Stone said. "It can cause serious health problems including lung disease and asthma attacks."

Young children and older people are particularly susceptible to the poor air quality, she added.

Smoke from coastal wildfires causes Valley air-quality alert

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2016

An air-quality alert has been issued for the San Joaquin Valley because of smoke from wildfires burning in Monterey and Santa Barbara counties and will extend through Wednesday, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said.

Air quality was poor Tuesday because of the smoky skies, the air district said. In the Fresno area, smoke is blowing into the region from the 117,600-acre Soberanes Fire that began burning in Big Sur in late July.

In Kings, Tulare and Kern counties, smoke has blown in from the 4,500-acre Canyon Fire that started Saturday in northern Santa Barbara County, said Modesto Vasquez, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Hanford.

Wildfire smoke causes ozone to form, which can cause lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. People should stay indoors, especially the elderly and young children, the air district said.

If you can smell smoke or see ash, you should treat air quality conditions as unhealthy for all groups.

Wednesday's forecast high temperature in Fresno is 90 degrees, down from the 95-degree reading Tuesday afternoon.

Conditions will keep cooling into Thursday, when a cold front will pass through the region and drop temperatures into the 70s.