

Winter season ends with improved air quality, fewer violations

By BoNhia Lee

Fresno Bee, Thursday, March 2, 2017

The Valley's residential wood-burning program ended its 14th winter with record improvement in air quality and fewer violations for breaking burn bans thanks to cleaner devices.

Between November and February, the months when the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District enforces wood-burning restrictions from Stockton to Bakersfield, the district issued 269 violations compared to 404 the previous season. In Fresno County, violations fell to 69 from 87.

"We are moving in the right direction thanks to the cooperation of Valley residents and their investments in cleaner devices," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director and air pollution control officer.

The Check Before You Burn season helps minimize the buildup of harmful fine particle pollution in the Valley. During this period, a daily wood-burning declaration is issued for every county in the air basin that determines what, if any, residential wood-burning devices may be used.

Check Before You Burn season ends

The Porterville Recorder, Thursday, March 2, 2017

The 14th winter of the Valley's residential wood-burning program ended with record improvement in air quality, said Valley air officials.

"We are moving in the right direction thanks to the cooperation of Valley residents and their investments in cleaner devices," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director and air pollution control officer. "Together with the increased funding for the Burn Cleaner program, which grants money for the purchase of cleaner devices, Check Before You Burn has had a remarkable effect on winter air quality in the Valley."

Check Before You Burn runs each winter from November through February and helps minimize the buildup of harmful fine particle pollution in the Valley. Each day during this period, a wood-burning declaration is issued for every county in the air basin that determines what, if any, residential wood-burning devices may be used.

In Tulare County, there were 44 days when no burning was allowed unless fireplace devices were registered. However, there were no complete bans. People were cited. The number of violations reported in Tulare County was 38, up from the 27 violations issued in 2015-16.

Valley residents wanting to switch out older wood-burning devices for a cleaner model can still take advantage of the District's Burn Cleaner grants which provide \$1,000 for certified wood, pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts or \$2,500 for eligible low-income applicants for all devices. An additional \$500 is available to all applicants for the installation costs on a natural gas device.

Visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner for program guidelines.

Beginning today, the district will no longer issue a daily residential wood burning status for each county. While no formal burning restrictions will be in place until Nov. 1, 2017, the district discourages residential wood burning.

Air officials: restrictions on wood burning are helping

By Steven Mayer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, March 2, 2017

The 14th winter of the San Joaquin Valley's residential wood-burning program ended this week with what air officials are calling a "record improvement in air quality."

"We are moving in the right direction thanks to the cooperation of valley residents and their investments in cleaner devices," San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Executive Director Seyed Sadredin said in a statement Wednesday.

The air district's annual wintertime program runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February. A key component is a daily wood-burning declaration for each valley county issued by the valley air district. The three declaration levels are "No Burning for All," "No Burning Unless Registered" and "No Restrictions, Burning Discouraged."

The second designation was added last winter, after the air district amended the rules to allow users of registered low-emission devices to burn more frequently than they were allowed in past winters.

Conversely, those with old technology have been asked to burn on fewer days in the hope that more residents will upgrade to cleaner technology. The air district hopes that those who don't upgrade will limit the burning of wood to a few times a year or eliminate it altogether.

Meanwhile, several thousand residents have converted to cleaner-burning devices since the district instituted the change last year, with eight of 10 opting for natural gas, said district spokeswoman Jaime Holt.

The incentives appear to be working, Sadredin said.

During winter 2015-2016, the district declared 364 "No Burning Unless Registered" instances, with 48 in the valley portion of Kern, 44 in Tulare County, 65 in Fresno County, and so forth, according to records released by the eight-county district.

This winter there were only 281 "No Burning Unless Registered" instances declared valley-wide, a 23 percent reduction from last winter.

However, Kern's numbers only dropped slightly, with 45 such days declared here this winter.

Valley residents who would like to switch out older wood-burning devices for a cleaner model can still take advantage of the district's Burn Cleaner grants, which provide \$1,000 for certified wood, pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts — or \$2,500 for eligible low-income applicants for all devices. An additional \$500 is available to all applicants for the installation costs on a natural gas device.

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