

Unusually severe smoke conditions in Eastern Madera County

Sierra Star, Tuesday, September 6, 2017

The Railroad and Mission fires, along with the Pier Fire in Tulare County, have prompted air officials to extend the current health cautionary statement through the week.

Currently smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountain and foothill areas of the air basin, but impacts on the Valley floor are possible until the fires are extinguished. The foothill and mountain communities of Madera County are experiencing unusually severe smoke impacts according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Overnight and early morning downslope flow may cause smoke to drift toward the San Joaquin Valley. While air quality impacts are forecast to be not as severe as over this past weekend, certain foothill and mountain areas may see unhealthy air quality with isolated pockets of smoke reaching the Valley floor.

Be advised that the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM2.5 which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke.

Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing ash impacts from these wildfires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash it is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) and remain indoors.

Smoke from fires can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move inside to an air conditioned environment.

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 page on the District's website to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-381-1809).

Wildfire smoke cancels Turlock, Ceres school trips to Foothill Horizons camp

By Deke Farrow

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2017

Poor air quality at Foothill Horizons Outdoor School in Sonora has canceled the visit this week of sixth-graders from Crowell Elementary in Turlock and Hidahl Elementary in Ceres.

About 150 to 160 students were scheduled for a four-day stay, said Jessica Hewitt, director and principal of the school, which is run by the Stanislaus County Office of Education. But smoke from at least the Summit Complex trio of fires burning in the Summit Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest has resulted in unhealthy air.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has an air quality alert in effect through Tuesday for the area because of smoke. Children are advised to avoid prolonged exposure.

Foothill Horizons is looking for opportunities to reschedule students from the two schools, Hewitt said, and hoping that no additional weeks will have to be canceled. "We're keeping a really close eye on fire containment and the weather forecasts – the winds, precipitation, pressure fronts coming through."

The program very much depends on kids being able to learn outdoors during their visit. "We can't do indoor-outdoor," she said.

An open house of Foothill Horizons' outdoor school, summer camp and rental facility is set for Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It's open to anyone, Hewitt said, but "predominantly the folks we get are parents concerned about having their kids visit."

Should Foothill Horizons have to cancel the open house, it will post the news on its website, www.foothillhorizons.com, and Facebook page. "It's on for now, but we'll be reviewing the hourly forecast," Hewitt said. "It largely depends on the winds."

Foothill Horizons, 21925 Lyons Bald Mountain Road, occupies 143 acres that includes forest, meadows and creeks. It has operated more than 60 years.

Wildfires create unhealthy air for Valley

Turlock Journal, Monday, September 5, 2017

The haze hanging over much of the Central Valley region is expected to continue through the foreseeable future because of wildfires raging in the area and has officials warning residents of the potentially hazardous health consequences.

Three large wildfires, the Mission Fire in Madera County, the Pier Fire in Tulare County and Railroad Fire in Madera/Mariposa Counties, have prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to extend the current health cautionary statement through the week.

Currently, smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountain and foothill areas of the air basin, but impacts on the Valley floor are possible until the fires are extinguished.

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