

## **Wildfire smoke plume could drop on Lodi**

By Danielle Vaughn

Lodi News-Sentinel, Saturday, July 15, 2017

As the Garza Fire continues to burn in Kings and Fresno counties, the influx of smoke is affecting the air quality of the San Joaquin Valley, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Cassandra Melching, the outreach and communications representative for the district, said that all eight counties in the valley, including San Joaquin County, have been affected by the smoke.

The valley is currently experiencing a strong pressure weather system which is acting as a lid, Melching said, and the emission from the wildfires has nowhere to go. A weak pressure system would allow the pollutants to disperse because of the stronger wind flow, she said. However a weaker pressure system isn't expected for the next few days.

Melching said the strong pressure system will cause plumes to start dropping down and it's hard to predict exactly when or where they are going to appear. So far, plumes have dropped in Turlock and Modesto and the public has already made reports of smelling forest fire there, she said.

"These random pockets every now and then will drop down into an area and people will smell it and that's when they know that they're being affected," Melching said. "That's why we tell people if you can smell it or if you can see ash you need to treat it as a Level 4 or Level 5 real time air advisory because you are being impacted."

Currently, Lodi and Stockton are in the clear and are at a Level 1 advisory, but the plumes can drop anywhere and at any time.

"If you step outside and see dark clouds, it's not clouds, it's smoke," Melching said. "It's aloft up high so if you step outside and take a look up and see the haziness, that's the smoke. It's just high enough that it hasn't been pushed down close enough just yet and it may or may not, but we just want people to be aware."

Smoke from fires such as the Garza Fire produce particulate matter (PM2.5), 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.

"People that do have pre-existing issues definitely need to follow advise from their health care professional and stay in constant communication with their doctors," Melching said.

According to Dr. Alvaro Garza, a San Joaquin County public health officer, the particulates produced from these fires make symptoms much worse for those already suffering from preexisting conditions. He said the smaller particles are more harmful than larger particles from ash because while the larger particles will get trapped in the mucus of the nose, the smaller particles are able to go deeper into the lungs. This could cause inflammation and coughing and will affect younger children, the elderly and those with preexisting health issues a lot more, he said.

Melching said it's typical for the air conditions to get like this during the summer because of the wildfires that tend to occur during the season. She said the topography of the area makes the situation even worse.

## **As the Garza Fire reaches 41,709 acres, smoke can be seen nearly to the coast**

By Ashleigh Panoo

Fresno Bee, Saturday, July 15, 2017

The Garza Fire, which began in western Kings before crossing into Fresno County, grew to 41,709 acres Friday night, according to Cal Fire.

Better news was that containment had reached 60 percent.

More than 1,300 fire personnel are on scene, including some from the California National Guard, which also sent helicopters to assist.

Flames have been fueled by tall grass and brush after the fire initially broke out northwest of Tar Canyon Road.

A non-mandatory evacuation warning is in place west of Highway 33, north of the Fresno County line and south of Jacalitos Creek, according to Cal Fire.

The cause remains under investigation.

Residents, including some as far away as Atascadero, could see smoke rising out beyond the hills east of Paso Robles.

"We are aware of the visibility of the Garza Fire," Cal Fire San Luis Obispo County wrote in a statement, "and are actively monitoring that situation and its proximity to San Luis Obispo."

Air quality in the central San Joaquin Valley will take another dive because of the Garza and other fires burning in the state, the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District reported.

Smoke from the Whittier Fire in Santa Barbara, the Schaeffer in Tulare County and the Alamo in San Luis Obispo are adding to particulate matter in the air.

A strong high pressure system is parked over the Valley, district spokeswoman Maricela Velasquez said, trapping the smoke. Spikes in particulate matter and ozone levels are possible.

A health alert will remain in place, and the district cautions that since ash from fire is larger than what its monitors detect, the Real-Time Air Advisory Network may not reflect exactly how much air quality has worsened.

"If you can smell smoke or see ash, that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as unhealthy and remain indoors," Velasquez said.

There were 13 wildfires in all burning in California as of Friday. The Alamo was at 28,687 acres but 90 percent contained.

The Schaeffer, which had burned 16,002 acres after it was triggered by lightning in Sequoia National Forest, was 61 percent contained as of Friday. The Whittier, at 52 percent containment, had burned more than 13,000 acres.

## **State wildfires impacting local air quality**

Turlock Journal, Friday, July 14, 2017

Smoke from several wildfires burning in California is having an impact on the Valley's air quality, prompting air officials to issue a health warning for the area.

Smoke from the Whittier (Santa Barbara County), Alamo (San Luis Obispo County) and Garza (Kings County) fires is affecting air quality in all locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley, from San Joaquin County to the Valley portion of Kern County. Smoke from the Schaeffer Fire located in Tulare County is affecting air quality in the foothill and mountain areas of Tulare and Kern County, especially the communities of Kennedy Meadows and Johnsondale.

The strong high-pressure system parked 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, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Smoke from fires produces particulate matter (PM2.5), 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 PM 2.5 and stay indoors if at all possible.

The health caution will remain in place and smoke impacts will continue until the fires are extinguished.

An area experiencing ash particles is especially harmful to the health of individuals. If smoke is smelt and ash is seen the air quality should be considered unhealthy.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at [www.valleyair.org/wildfires](http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires) for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can check the nearest RAAN monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions at [www.valleyair.org/RAAN](http://www.valleyair.org/RAAN).