

Valley Air District warns about pollution level from warm weather and stagnant air

By Brianna Calix

Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee, Thursday, February 1, 2018

The Valley Air District is warning residents to avoid strenuous outdoor activity as a high-pressure weather system traps pollution in the area and causes temperatures to rise.

"Unfortunately, these stagnant conditions may cause high concentrations of particulate pollution in our region," said Jon Klassen, the district's air quality analysis manager. "While these conditions bring about pleasant unseasonably warm temperatures, it is best to avoid heavy outdoor activities during periods of elevated particulate matter concentrations."

The weather system, off the California coast, is limiting airflow throughout the San Joaquin Valley, according to a news release from the air district.

Air quality in Fresno and Madera counties on Wednesday was moderate, but Fresno's forecast was predicted to be unhealthy for sensitive groups on Thursday. Kings and Tulare were listed as unhealthy for sensitive groups both days.

District officials advise people to refrain from strenuous outdoor activities "until conditions improve."

"After decades of investment and sacrifice by Valley businesses and residents, emissions have been reduced by more than 80 percent and are at historically low levels," the news release said. "However, these stagnant conditions that the Valley is facing due to extraordinary weather conditions can still lead to elevated particulate matter concentrations. Particulate pollution is harmful and has been correlated with asthma attacks, bronchial infections, heart attacks and stroke."

Air district issues Health Cautionary Statement

By Steven Mayer

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The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a Health Cautionary Statement due to high air pollution levels in the San Joaquin Valley. A strong high-pressure system off the coast of California is limiting air flow and dispersion throughout the San Joaquin Valley, allowing the buildup of harmful particles in the air known as PM 2.5.

"Unfortunately, these stagnant conditions may cause high concentrations of particulate pollution in our region," said Jon Klassen, district air quality analysis manager. "While these conditions bring about pleasant unseasonably warm temperatures, it is best to avoid heavy outdoor activities during periods of elevated particulate matter concentrations."

The cautionary statement will remain effective until conditions improve. Meanwhile, air officials are encouraging valley residents to use the district's Real-time Air Advisory Network, or RAAN, available on the district's website at www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

The RAAN network provides residents up and down the valley with real-time air quality information for areas throughout the region.

Although the federal ambient air quality standard for particulate matter set at 35 micrograms per cubic meter is based on the average exposure to such concentrations over a 24-hour period, the district urges the public to use RAAN as a more health-protective option.

The RAAN system shows actual hourly concentrations and issues warnings during elevated hourly concentrations even when daily average concentrations may be below the health standard established by EPA.

Particulate pollution is harmful and has been correlated with asthma attacks, bronchial infections, heart attacks and stroke.

For more information, call the regional district office in Bakersfield at 392-5500.