



VALLEY AIR NEWS

Spare the Air season begins

Spare the Air is here and Valley employers are helping to aggressively fight the battle against summertime air pollution.

The Spare the Air season runs from the first Tuesday in June through the end of September. During that time, Spare the Air days are called when the air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

The primary air-pollution problem in the Valley during summer is ozone, the main ingredient of smog. Cars, trucks and other mobile sources, which contribute more than half of the smog-forming pollutants in the Valley, are not under the jurisdiction of the Air District. Therefore, voluntary programs such as Spare the Air are invaluable in encouraging Valley residents to take an active part in reaching state and federal clean air standards.

When the District forecasts a Spare the Air Day, e-mail or fax notices are sent to employers who have registered in the program. They, in turn, notify their employees and encourage them to adopt air-friendly behaviors that will help reduce pollution levels. Despite years of air-quality improvements, the Valley air basin still is one of the country's worst for summertime smog.

Participation is free of charge and the District provides employer participants with brochures, notification posters and incentive items. Additionally, the Spare the Air status is updated daily, by county, on the District's toll-free phone line at 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) and online at www.valleyair.org.

There are many ways residents can Spare the Air that include everyday activities such as:

- Sharing a ride, vanpooling or taking mass transit instead of driving alone;
- Postponing the use of gas-powered lawn-care equipment;
- Using an electric briquette lighter instead of lighter fluid; and
- Keeping the car tuned up.

For more information on how to Spare the Air or become an employer partner, go to our website or call 559-230-6000.



Next phase of open burning restrictions goes into effect

situations where feasible alternatives to burning don't currently exist.

The District has granted an extension for citrus, apple, pear, quince and fig orchards, as well as rice, because these crops either can contain a pervasive tree disease that is transferable unless the waste is burned, or because an alternative disposal method doesn't exist. Orchard removals 20 acres or smaller were granted the extension because the cost of alternative disposal methods is prohibitive to smaller farms.

Orchard removals represent about 50 percent of all agricultural burning in the Valley. The exempt orchards make up only ten percent of the Valley's total emissions from agricultural burning. Burning still won't be allowed on smoggy days in the Valley or during conditions that could lead to a violation of federal air-quality standards.

Sayed Sadredin, the District's Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer, has asked state legislators to author legislation offering biomass power plants a higher price for the electricity they sell to utilities and to require a greater use of agricultural waste. "Currently, it doesn't make economic sense for a biomass power plant to use large amounts of agricultural waste as fuel," Sadredin said.

Burning chipped agricultural waste at biomass power plants is a cleaner alternative than open burning.

On June 1, the Air District initiated the third stage of rules to phase out all agricultural burning by 2010.

Farmers must now use alternative methods to dispose of orchard-removal waste, such as chipping or mulching.

The rule is expected to reduce nearly 2,400 tons per year of smog-forming and particle emissions Valley-wide. Specifically, the rule reduces 811 tons per year of volatile organic compounds, 644 tons of nitrogen oxides and 938 tons of particulate matter ten microns and smaller (PM10).

The phase out began in 2004 when the District outlined restrictions regarding diseased crops. The second stage of the phase out took place in 2005 with the prohibition of burning field crop waste, tree prunings and using burning as a method of weed abatement.

As prescribed by the state law (SB 705, Florez) that mandates phasing out agricultural burning, the rule allows for minor exceptions in