

VALLEY AIR NEWS



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District prepares for 11th Check before You Burn season

Before you light your fireplace, wood or pellet stove or insert, avoid creating unnecessary air pollution and being fined by checking before you burn. That's the Valley Air District's message to residents as it gears up for the 11th annual wintertime program that reduces dangerous particle pollution.

Check before You Burn (formally known as Rule 4901, Wood Burning Fireplaces and Wood Burning Heaters) curtails residential wood burning when air quality deteriorates in order to prevent build-up of fine-particulate matter (PM2.5). The program is the District's single most-successful and cost-effective regulation, addressing winter's single-largest source of particle pollution.

Since its adoption in 2003, when residential wood burning produced as much as 24 tons per day of PM, the Valley has seen dramatic improvements to winter air quality. PM generated from residential wood burning in the Valley now averages about 16 tons per day.

Stagnant winter conditions in the Valley keep PM at ground level, often building up to high concentrations. This harmful pollutant, made up of smoke, ash, soot and other materials, is linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death.

How to find out when you can burn

When visiting either of the Air District's websites at www.valleyair.org or www.healthyliving.com, look for these logos next to your county to learn the wood-burning declaration for the day.



Residents can also call the District's toll-free line to receive wood-burning information at 1-800-766-4463 or 1-800-SMOG-INFO.

And, new this year, the District has added an iPhone app that allows residents to use their iPhone to obtain the daily wood burning declaration, air quality forecast, current air quality and make an air quality-related complaint. The app can be found in the app store under "Valley Air."

How to burn cleanly

When wood burning is allowed, residents are urged to use clean, dry wood in their fireplaces or wood stoves, to use manufactured fire logs when possible, and advised to use the cleanest wood-burning devices available.

EPA Certified wood stoves/inserts and pellet-fueled heaters are much cleaner and more efficient than open fireplaces and older wood stoves. Natural gas is the cleanest and most efficient way to heat your home.



Don't confuse open burning with residential wood burning

As the wood-burning season approaches, residents of the San Joaquin Valley are reminded to follow rules designed to protect public health from dangerous particle pollution.

The Check Before You Burn Program affects owners of fireplaces and wood and pellet stoves inside their homes, as well as outdoor wood-burning units that include fireplaces, chimeneas and fire pits.

However, these rules differ greatly from other outdoor burn rules, which affect farmers and ranchers.

Agricultural Burning

Ag burning, regulated by District Rule 4103 (Open Burning), allows a very limited amount of agricultural waste to be disposed of by burning.



Only commercial farmers with burn permits are allowed to burn specific crops, prunings and fallen trees under the direction of the Air District. Ag burning is normally prohibited when residential wood burning is prohibited.

Most agricultural burning has been eliminated since a phase-out began in 2005, requiring most farmers to dispose of waste by chipping and grinding.

Hazard Reduction Burning

Under Rule 4106 (Prescribed Burning and Hazard Reduction Burning), some burning is allowed in foothill areas to reduce fire hazards around buildings and structures. A Hazard Reduction Burn Permit and clearance from local fire agencies is required before a hazard reduction burn can take place.

Don't forget!

Burning trash and using a burn barrel is always illegal.

