March 25, 2020

The current COVID-19 pandemic has impacted life for all of us here in the San Joaquin Valley. We are facing truly unprecedented and difficult challenges, but I know that the resourcefulness and ingenuity of those of us living in the San Joaquin Valley will allow us to weather this storm.

As an essential public health agency and member of the Valley community, we have a responsibility to continue providing essential public services while keeping ourselves and our communities safe. By continuing to monitor and communicate air quality information to the public, respond to complaints, work with businesses to fulfill their air quality needs, keep our vendors and grantees paid, and maintain other essential services; we will continue playing our role in protecting the public's health and quality of life.

We also understand the major disruption to the Valley and nation’s economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and will work closely with those that we regulate to understand the evolving situation and associated impacts, and develop options for meeting air quality obligations.

To date our actions and responses have been, and will continue to be, based on closely monitoring the situation from local, state, and federal public health authorities, including:

- Centers for Disease Control,
- California Department of Public Health,
- The Governor's Office,
- The President of the United States, and
- Our local agencies, including all eight Valley counties and multiple Valley cities

In response to evolving recommendations from public health authorities, we have taken a number of steps to adjust our operations with a focus on safety and ensuring business continuity, such as closing our offices to the public, encouraging stakeholders to continue to reach out to us via phone, email, fax, or traditional mail for service, expanding our telecommuting tools for employees, shifting all public meetings to online meetings and teleconferences, and much more. We will continue to closely monitor this evolving situation and adjust as necessary to meet the needs of our community.

I want to thank our employees and general public for being professional, flexible, and patient as we develop and quickly implement rapidly-evolving policy enhancements and work practice improvements to ensure that our services continue to be available. As a public health agency, we plan to continue providing essential services to the residents, businesses, and public agencies of our Valley through virtual tools and direct support from our employees working remotely.

If you have questions or concerns about the Valley Air District’s programs, please continue to reach out to us through various means available, with updated information available at the District’s website: www.valleyair.org.

Samir Sheikh
Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer