

News Release

For immediate release

Oct. 31, 2008

>>Attn: Local and assignment
editors<<



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AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

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Annual fireplace program begins Saturday

*Check Before You Burn puts in place lower prohibition threshold,
simplifies forecast levels*

Check Before You Burn season begins Nov. 1 with changes to the residential wood-burning curtailment rule. In order to better protect the public health from harmful effects of particulate matter (PM), the Valley Air District has lowered the threshold for declaring curtailments.

Additionally, there will now be just two levels of wood-burning forecast instead of the three levels in previous years. Beginning Nov. 1, the daily wood-burning forecast, issued by county, will either be "Wood burning Prohibited" or "Please Burn Cleanly," depending on expected air quality. The tightened restrictions were approved by the Air District's Governing Board this month in order to increase the level of protection of public health from PM.

"We have the most stringent protections in the state for exposure to particulate matter," said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "Our board continues to be aggressive on behalf of the Valley's residents."

Residential wood burning can put as much as 24 tons of PM into the Valley's air on a typical winter day. PM has been linked to bronchial infections, chronic lung disease and lung cancer.

Each winter, Check Before You Burn dramatically reduces the levels of PM in the air basin.

When a prohibition is declared, burning any solid fuel in a residential fireplace or wood-burning device is not permitted. There are two exceptions, however:

- * If the residence does not have access to natural-gas service, even if propane is available; or
- * If burning solid fuel is the sole source of heat for the residence.

A previous exemption for those living above 3,000 feet has been removed. However, many mountain communities do not have natural-gas service, so their residents may still be exempt from prohibitions.

As always, daily wood-burning forecasts will be available by county each day at 4:30 p.m. at <http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm>, by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by subscribing to the Air District's daily air quality forecast at <http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm>.

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Additionally, the Air District plans to offer again this winter an incentive program for people who wish to change out their fireplace or older, wood-burning device for a newer, cleaner unit. More information on the Burn Cleaner program will be available later this winter.

For more information about Check Before You Burn, call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-326-6900). The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and San Joaquin Valley air basin portions of Kern.