

News Release

For immediate release

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>>City and assignment editors<<



San Joaquin Valley
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Consider health when lighting that holiday fire, officials urge

FRESNO – Valley Air District officials are urging residents to consider their health and that of their neighbors when planning to use their fireplaces this holiday season, and to Check Before You Burn.

“The holiday season is a time when a cozy fire is particularly welcoming,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “We’re asking people to take their own health, and that of their neighbors, into consideration when they think about building a fire this week.”

Residential wood burning can contribute up to a third of harmful particulate matter (PM) – composed of soot, ash, tiny droplets of liquid and other matter – to Valley skies. Exposure to PM can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias.

Check Before You Burn is a wintertime program that advises residents of the wood-burning status in their counties each day. Forecasts are either “burn cleanly” or “wood-burning prohibited.” When wood burning is allowed, people are urged to burn as cleanly as possible, which includes using manufactured fire logs or dry, seasoned wood.

Exemptions from wood-burning prohibitions are available if wood burning is the only source of heat or if the residence does not have natural-gas heating, even if propane is used.

Air-quality forecasts are available by county at 4:30 p.m. each day at www.valleyair.org or by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463). Forecasts are in effect from midnight to midnight.

And as always, burning trash is NEVER allowed. This includes wrapping from holiday gifts.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portions of Kern. For more information, visit the website or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209-557-6400); Fresno (559-230-6000); or Bakersfield (661-326-6900).