

News Release

For immediate release

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>>Attn: Local and assignment editors<<



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

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First fireplace-use ban issued for Friday

Deteriorating air quality prohibits wood burning in Fresno County

The season's first fireplace and wood stove prohibition has been issued in Fresno County for Friday, Nov. 7, because of deteriorating air quality. The daylong mandatory curtailment will be in effect from midnight Thursday through midnight Friday.

The curtailment applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured firelogs, and is the first ban of the season. The wood-burning curtailment program, Check Before You Burn, runs each year from Nov. 1 through the last day of February and aims to reduce wintertime particulate pollution by restricting the use of wood-burning devices when air quality is forecast to deteriorate. Forecasts are issued on a county-by-county basis.

This year, the Valley Air District expects more prohibitions than in previous years because the threshold for curtailments has been lowered, in order to be more protective of public health. Residential wood burning pumps dangerous particulate matter (PM) into Valley skies. PM has been shown to cause bronchial infections, exacerbate respiratory and cardiac illness, and even cause lung cancer.

Additionally, there are now just two levels of wood-burning forecast instead of the three levels in previous years: "Wood burning Prohibited" or "Please Burn Cleanly," depending on expected air quality.

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.

Prohibition violations may be subject to fines.

Daily wood-burning forecasts are available 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>.

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.