

For immediate release 2/26/15

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Check Before You Burn ends season *Cleaner devices see fewer restrictions this winter*

The first winter of the amended residential wood-burning program ends Feb. 28 with more days that newer, cleaner wood-burning devices could be used compared to past winters.

Check Before You Burn, the program that minimizes the build-up of harmful fine particle pollution, runs each winter from November through February. Each day during this period, a wood-burning declaration is issued for each county in the air basin that determines what, if any, residential wood-burning devices may be used. This winter, the regulation was amended to allow users of EPA Phase II-certified wood-burning devices to register them with the District and use them more frequently than they were allowed in past winters through the adoption of a third wood-burning declaration category, “No burning unless registered.” There are two additional categories that are similar to past years: “No restrictions, burning discouraged” and “No burning for all.” Violations of wood-burning curtailments can result in fines.

Simultaneously, the District reduced the threshold at which the use of older, noncertified units would be allowed to be used. Together, these two changes reduced the amount of particles in the air basin.

“The response we received to these changes was enthusiastic,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s executive director and air pollution control officer. “Together with increased funding for the Burn Cleaner program, which grants money to purchase cleaner wood-burning devices, Check Before You Burn has had a very positive effect on winter air quality in the Valley.”

Through February, nearly 3,000 wood-burning devices were registered with the District as meeting current EPA emission standards. Gas devices are also clean-burning although they do not need to be registered.

This winter, as of Feb. 26, there were 36 days when wood burning was not allowed for anyone in at least one county. Comparatively, last winter, there were a total of 376 curtailments throughout the air basin (see chart).

Despite the fewer number of all-out wood-burning prohibitions, the air remained cleaner this year, officials said.

“The level at which the use of devices that do not meet current emission standards was prohibited was set at a considerably lower level than in previous years,” Sadredin said. “This resulted in a net decrease in associated emissions, even though cleaner devices could be used more often.”

The District offered more money this year to Valley residents to change out their older wood-burning devices as well, granting \$1,000 to most residents (up from \$500 last year) and \$2,500 to low-income residents, with an additional

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\$500 available to anyone who purchased a gas-burning device for installing the gas line. This increased funding removed some of the financial obstacles to upgrading wood-burning devices.

This season, there were fewer days during which the fine-particle level exceeded the federal health standard of 35 micrograms per cubic meter. There was also more rain and less atmospheric stagnancy than last winter, although the statewide drought continues with associated air-quality effects.

“The drier weather continues to thwart our efforts to reach attainment for fine particles,” Sadredin said. “But we are encouraged that with these changes to the wood-burning rule, we’re moving in the right direction.”

Beginning March 1, the District will no longer be issuing a daily residential wood burning status for each county. While no formal burning restrictions will be in place after Feb. 28, the District discourages residential wood burning.

For more information about Check Before You Burn, visit www.valleyair.org/CBYB. For Burn Cleaner information, see www.valleyair.org/Burncleaner.

2014-15 Statistics*

<i>County</i>	<i>No Burning Unless Registered</i>	<i>No Burning for All</i>	<i>Notices of Violation</i>
San Joaquin	58	1	67
Stanislaus	69	1	95
Merced	62	0	70
Madera	66	5	33
Fresno	74	6	86
Kings	67	7	11
Tulare	65	7	69
Kern (Valley portion)	71	9	39
Sequoia Nat. Park	6	0	0
Frazier Park	1	0	0
TOTALS	539	36	470

*through Feb. 26

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2013-14 Statistics

<i>County</i>	<i>Prohibitions</i>	<i>Notices of Violation</i>
San Joaquin	45	69
Stanislaus	53	118
Merced	25	60
Madera	39	23
Fresno	59	158
Kings	53	24
Tulare	51	50
Kern (Valley portion)	51	45
TOTALS	376	547