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Three fires prompt extension of health caution

Wildfire smoke continues to impact foothill and mountainous communities, has potential to reach Valley floor

Three large wildfires, the Mission Fire in Madera County, the Pier Fire in Tulare County, and Railroad Fire in Madera/Mariposa Counties, have prompted local air officials to extend the current health cautionary statement through the week. Currently smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountain and foothill areas of the air basin, but impacts on the Valley floor are possible until the fires are extinguished. The foothill and mountain communities of Madera County are experiencing unusually severe smoke impacts.

Overnight and early morning downslope flow may cause smoke to drift toward the San Joaquin Valley. While air quality impacts are forecast to be not as severe as over this past weekend, certain foothill and mountain areas may see unhealthy air quality with isolated pockets of smoke reaching the Valley floor.

Please be advised that the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM_{2.5} which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing ash impacts from these wildfires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash it is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) and remain indoors.

Smoke from fires can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move inside to an air conditioned environment.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-381-1809).