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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Gusty winds prompt health caution

Blowing dust poses potential health concern Valley-wide

The potential for blowing dust as a result of gusty winds has prompted local air pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement through Monday evening for San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern County.

A low pressure system is dropping southward along the east side of the Sierra Nevada today and will generate strong northwesterly winds across the San Joaquin Valley, especially the northern and western portions of the Valley. The windy conditions will cause localized blowing dust in areas where soils are exceptionally dry, and create unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller (PM10). Exposure to particulate pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections.

Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).