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2018-2019 Check Before You Burn season ends

Today marks the end of the Valley's 16th residential wood burning season. The Check Before You Burn Program takes place each winter from November through February and is designed to minimize the build-up of harmful fine particle pollution. Despite record-breaking wildfires at the beginning of the season, the remainder of the season was among the cleanest in recorded history.

Regional high pressure systems often cause pollutants to become trapped in the bowl-shaped San Joaquin Valley, creating high concentrations of PM_{2.5} (fine particulate matter pollution) that build up very quickly at ground level, resulting in poor air quality. During a period of particularly poor dispersion, November's Camp Fire generated some of the most significant smoke impacts ever experienced in the Valley. However, frequent winter storms immediately following the Camp Fire, combined with favorable weather patterns, a high level of cooperation by Valley residents and the use of much cleaner wood, pellet & natural gas devices, made possible by the District's Burn Cleaner Program, all played pivotal roles in the vast improvement to wintertime air quality this season.

"District incentives have helped hundreds of our residents invest in cleaner devices," said Samir Sheikh, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "Such investments by the public along with those by Valley stakeholders, and a variety of other emission-reduction strategies, have resulted in cleaner air for every San Joaquin Valley resident."

Residents interested in upgrading from an open-hearth fireplace or older wood stove, to a cleaner device, are encouraged to take advantage of the District's Burn Cleaner incentive program, which provides \$1,000 for certified wood/pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts. Low income residents are eligible for \$2,500 to purchase such devices. An additional \$500 is also available toward installation costs when choosing a natural gas device over wood or pellet. Visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner for program guidelines.

The District issues a daily wood-burning declaration, based on the air quality forecast for each county with one of three specific designations: "No Burning for All," "No Burning Unless Registered," or "No Restrictions, Burning Discouraged." While no formal burning restrictions will be in place from now until November 1, 2019, the District discourages all residential wood burning.

Additionally, March through October is a great time to get clean burning devices registered ahead of next year's wood burning season. Visit www.valleyair.org/CBYBregistration for details.

County	No Burning Unless Registered		No Burning for All		Notices of Violation*	
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019
San Joaquin	45	40	0	10	79	109
Stanislaus	49	37	2	10	73	100
Merced	48	33	1	8	55	59
Madera	51	35	1	5	23	18
Fresno	52	54	5	5	122	150
Kings	59	50	8	13	18	17
Tulare	55	52	6	5	54	42
Kern	58	44	6	6	55	58
Sequoia National Park & Forest	0	14	0	7	0	0
Kern (Greater Frazier Park Area)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals:	418	359	29	69	479	553

*Violations of wood-burning curtailments can result in fines.

PM2.5 can have adverse effects on public health, aggravating heart and lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis. For more information, visit the Valley Air District's website at www.valleyair.org, or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).