

For immediate release 09-08-2020

Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

Media Contact:

Heather Heinks (559) 230-5898

Spanish-language

Maricela Velasquez (559) 230-5849

Creek Fire and High Winds Bring Significant Smoke and Potential for Blowing Dust throughout Valley

Poor air quality will continue through the week

The Creek Fire and other wildfires around the state are causing smoke impacts to all counties of the Valley air basin. As a result, the District is reissuing the current health caution (originally issued on August 17th), which will remain in place until the fires are extinguished. The District anticipates unhealthy air quality to affect various parts of the Valley through the week and into the weekend and warns residents to stay indoors.

The Creek Fire, located in the mountain and foothill regions of Fresno and Madera Counties, is producing smoke that is infiltrating into the San Joaquin Valley and bringing unhealthy air quality conditions. As winds shift Tuesday and Wednesday, smoke from the Creek Fire will continue to blow directly into the Valley, causing increased particulate matter pollution and potential for high-levels of ozone. These same winds are predicted to be gusty throughout today into the evening, causing blowing dust and elevated levels of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller (PM10) throughout the Valley. Air pollution officials caution Valley residents to reduce exposure to the particulate matter (PM) emissions by remaining indoors in affected areas.

PM pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution. Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move indoors, to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. The common cloth and paper masks individuals are wearing due to COVID-19 concerns may not protect them from wildfire smoke.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley location by visiting myRAAN.com. District air monitoring stations are designed to detect microscopic PM 2.5 particles that exist in smoke. However, larger particles, such as ash, may not be detected. If you smell

smoke or see falling ash in your immediate vicinity, consider air quality “unhealthy” (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if RAAN displays lower level of pollution.

The public can also check the District’s wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current and recently past wildfires affecting the Valley. In addition, anyone can follow air quality conditions by downloading the free “Valley Air” app on their mobile device.

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). District Outreach and Communications personnel are also available for media interviews via Zoom or by phone.