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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

It's official: Wildfire season has begun for the Valley *District cautions Valley residents to be prepared for smoke impacts from wildfires*

The Willow Fire in Monterey County, the Crane Fire in Kern County, and multiple fires in the foothills and mountains of Tulare County have marked the beginning of wildfire season in the San Joaquin Valley. While fire crews are operating to fully contain and suppress the fires; hot, dry conditions throughout the weekend have the potential to influence fire growth and lead to smoke impacts in our region. Air pollution officials will continue to monitor the situation and caution Valley residents to be prepared for smoke impacts from other fires this season.

A build-up of dry vegetation during the hot summer months presents a high risk for hotter, faster moving fires in mountain communities surrounding the Valley, often sending smoke into the San Joaquin Valley. Wildfire smoke contains particulate matter (PM), which 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 negative 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 and contact their primary care provider for more information.

The public can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current 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.