

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
News Release

For Immediate Release
July 18, 2003

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Air pollution district approves wood-burning restrictions
No-light program takes effect this winter

Wood-burning restrictions designed to improve wintertime air quality were adopted yesterday by the Governing Board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Rule 4901 (Wood-Burning Fireplaces and Wood-Burning Heaters) includes a mandatory no-light program for winter nights when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy for the general public. The curtailments will be in effect during the winter, starting this November. The Valley Air District expects that wood burning will be prohibited four to 25 days each winter, depending on air quality conditions in each county.

The rule also includes a change-out requirement to ensure wood-burning stoves and fireplace inserts are as clean as possible prior to the transfer or sale of property, as well as a limit on the number of wood-burning devices allowed in new developments. These components of the rule will take effect Jan. 1, 2004.

The Air District adopted a voluntary no-light program in 1993 to protect Valley residents from the serious health effects of airborne particulates. However, in Feb. 2002 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that the rule doesn't fully comply with the federal Clean Air Act and must be strengthened.

Tiny airborne particles can get lodged deep in the lungs, resulting in serious health complications. Particulates include microscopic fly ash, nitrates, salts, sulfates, dust, smoke and soot. During winter months, residential wood burning adds more than 24 tons per day of particulates to Valley air quality problems.

The new rule includes:

Curtailments. When airborne particulates are forecast to reach or exceed an Air Quality Index of 150, a level that is unhealthy for everyone, wood burning will be prohibited in the affected counties. Based on historical data, this would happen as many as 25 days during the winter. Additionally, the Air District will continue public outreach encouraging residents to use cleaner burning alternatives. Residents in affected areas will be asked to voluntarily refrain from burning wood when air quality is forecast to be between 100 and 149 on the AQI. This level is unhealthy for sensitive groups.

The curtailments will not apply to homes without natural gas service. They also won't apply to homes above 3,000 feet in elevation, or in which wood burning is the sole source of heat.

Density Limits. Beginning Jan. 1, 2004, builders can install up to two EPA Phase II-certified wood-burning units per acre in new developments. In new developments with less than two dwellings per acre, each dwelling would be allowed to have one EPA Phase II-certified wood-burning unit or a wood-burning fireplace.

Change-out requirement. Also beginning Jan. 1, 2004, the rule will require the removal or retirement of non-EPA-certified wood-burning devices prior to the sale or transfer of property. The devices could be replaced with natural gas, propane or EPA-certified Phase II wood-burning units.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call (559) 230-5800.