

News Release

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For Immediate Release

TO:

Local News Sections



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

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Second season of wood-burning bans ending

Residents prohibited from lighting wood and pellet fires on only a few days

Fresno, CA – Wood burning was prohibited on just three days this winter in various parts of the San Joaquin Valley because of poor air quality, according to officials at the Valley Air District.

The Air District's *Check Before You Burn* wood-burning curtailment program concludes Monday night for the 2004-05 season.

Check Before You Burn, which runs from November through February each year, aims to reduce wintertime air pollution by discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood-burning devices such as fireplaces and inserts when air quality is expected to be unhealthy. The season-ending daily wood-burning status will be issued for Monday and will be in effect until midnight that night.

This season, residents of Fresno, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties each were prohibited from burning wood or pellets on two days – Nov. 20 and Dec. 4 in Kern, and Dec. 3 and 4 in Fresno and Tulare. Valley-wide, residents were discouraged from burning wood from six to 44 times, depending on the location.

“We are really impressed with the degree of public cooperation on days when air quality is deteriorating,” said Jaime Holt, the Air District’s public education administrator. “When people voluntarily refrain from burning, we don’t have to issue as many mandatory prohibitions as we otherwise would.”

Through *Check Before You Burn*, wood burning in an open fireplace or older insert is discouraged when air quality is projected to be in the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” range, or an Air Quality Index between 101 and 150. Wood burning is prohibited when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for everyone, or an AQI of 151 or higher.

When wood burning is prohibited, violators are subject to fines.

"The high level of compliance with both the voluntary and mandatory curtailments means people are breathing cleaner air," Holt said.

Since November, the Air District has issued voluntary and mandatory curtailments as follow, with comparison to last year's season:

County	Voluntary Curtailments ("Discouraged") This season (last season)	Mandatory Curtailments ("Prohibited") This season (last season)	Notices of Violation This season only
Fresno	44 (53)	2: Dec. 3 and 4 (2)	26
Kern (valley only)	37 (49)	2: Nov. 20 and Dec. 4 (1)	10
Kings	6 (1)	0	0
Madera	13 (10)	0	0
Merced	15 (13)	0	0
San Joaquin	11 (6)	0	0
Stanislaus	28 (32)	0	0
Tulare	25 (23)	2: Dec. 3 and 4 (0)	8

Wood-burning restrictions do not apply to natural gas or propane devices; homes at elevations of 3,000 feet or higher; homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat; and homes in areas with no natural-gas service.

The Air District's wood-burning rule has two other components aimed at improving wintertime air quality. It limits the number of wood-burning devices allowed in new residential developments and requires that any woodstove or fireplace insert left in a home when it is sold or transferred meet 1990 EPA emissions standards.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For more information, visit www.valleyair.org. Or, call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.

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