

News Release

02-28-2006

For Immediate Release

TO:

Local News Sections



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

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Fireplace program wraps up for season

Number of restrictions closer to original estimate than previous years

Fresno, CA – Fireplace restrictions in the San Joaquin Valley are winding down for the season.

The *Check Before You Burn* fireplace and woodstove curtailment program concludes tonight for the 2005-06 season. The season-ending wood-burning status issued for today will be in effect until midnight.

Check Before You Burn, which runs 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.

This season, wood burning was prohibited at least once in each of the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley. The first-ever Valley-wide mandatory curtailment was issued Dec. 13. The final prohibition of the season was declared Feb. 14 for the valley portion of Kern County.

When the Air District adopted the program in 2003, it was anticipated that Valley residents could expect between four and 25 mandatory curtailments per season, depending on which county they live in. The first two years of the program saw only two to three mandatory curtailments per season.

The Valley experienced a more stagnant weather pattern this winter than last season, said Evan Shipp, Supervisor of Air Quality Analysis for the Air District.

“We had periods of high pressure over the Valley, with weak winds and strong inversions, which allowed particulates to build up day-after-day,” Shipp said. “The year before, we had more dynamic weather systems that moved across the Valley and helped clear the air.”

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 may receive a Notice of Violation and be subject to fines. First-time violators either pay a \$50 fine or attend an air-quality education class at the Air District office.

Since November, the Air District has issued voluntary and mandatory curtailments as follows, with comparisons to the 2004-05 season:

County	Mandatory Curtailments ("Prohibited") 2005-06 season ['04-05]	Notices of Violation	Voluntary Curtailments ("Discouraged")
Fresno	11 [2]	71 [26]	34 [44]
Kern (valley only)	16 [2]	35 [10]	19 [37]
Kings	13 [0]	7 [0]	23 [6]
Madera	2 [0]	1 [0]	28 [13]
Merced	2 [0]	0 [0]	22 [15]
San Joaquin	1 [0]	9 [0]	14 [11]
Stanislaus	3 [0]	16 [0]	20 [28]
Tulare	9 [2]	20 [8]	28 [25]

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

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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