

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Check Before You Burn* kicks off fifth year**

Fresno – The fifth Check Before You Burn residential wood-burning season begins Thursday.

Each year at this time, San Joaquin Valley residents are reminded to check their county's wood-burning status daily before lighting a fireplace or stove that burns wood, pellets or manufactured logs.

The program, which runs through February, helps reduce wintertime air pollution by either discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood fireplaces, wood-burning stoves and pellet stoves when air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

"The public's cooperation has played a big role in improving the Valley's air quality during the winter over the past four years," said Seyed Sadredin, the District's Air Pollution Control Officer.

Officials credit the public's support of the wood-burning program as key to the air basin's recent attainment of health standards for particulate matter 10 microns and smaller (PM 10).

The season's first wood-burning status will be issued today and take effect at 12:01 a.m. Thursday. The status is issued daily on a county-by-county basis and is in effect from midnight to midnight. It is available toll-free at 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) or online at www.valleyair.org. Many local news outlets also provide the information as a public service.

Burning any solid fuel – such as wood, manufactured firelogs or pellets – is prohibited when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy for everyone, or an Air Quality Index of 151 or higher. Burning wood in a open fireplace or older insert is discouraged on a voluntary basis when air quality is projected to be in the "unhealthy for sensitive groups" range of 101 and 150.

When wood burning is prohibited, violators may receive a Notice of Violation and be subject to fines. Fines for first-time violations start at \$50.

The restrictions do not apply to devices fueled exclusively by natural gas or propane; cooking stoves; 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.

-more-

Check Before You Burn enters fifth year

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The regulation applies to the eight counties of the Air District: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the [western] portion of Kern.

And remember: Burning trash is NEVER allowed.

Last season, the following prohibitions were declared in each county from Nov. 1 through Feb. 28:

<u>San Joaquin</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Stanislaus</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Merced</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Madera</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Fresno</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Kern (Valley air basin)</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Kings</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Tulare</u>	<u>3</u>

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400; Fresno (559) 230-6000; or Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.