

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

Local News, Health and Weather
sections

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High winds prompt health warning Air District cautions that air pollution levels climbing

Unusual weather and high winds throughout the San Joaquin Valley have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement through Saturday evening.

High winds aloft and at the surface are transporting dust and depositing it. "Winds have been very strong in the Sacramento and Northern San Joaquin Valley, and now the dust that was picked up there is being deposited throughout the valley. This is creating unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10," said Evan Shipp, a meteorologist for the District.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents of the San Joaquin Valley are advised to use caution today and tomorrow. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

The air quality today will continue to be near unhealthful for sensitive groups levels and should become better as the particulate matter deposits. Over the weekend particulate levels will not be as widespread as they were today, but it is possible that PM10 will remain elevated as the dispersion of pollutants diminishes with the lower wind speeds.

On Feb. 16, 2006, the Valley Air District's Governing Board approved a "Natural Events Action Plan" (NEAP) that outlines a protocol to inform the public when unusual natural events occur. The purpose of the plan is to identify and minimize public exposure to these unusual events. The full text of the NEAP is available online at [http://www.valleyair.org/Workshops/postings/2-16-06-NEAP/Natural Events Action Plan.pdf](http://www.valleyair.org/Workshops/postings/2-16-06-NEAP/Natural%20Events%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

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 <http://www.valleyair.org/> or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.