

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

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Business Sections**

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Court Ruling May Set Stage For Air-Quality Milestone Valley Air District Anticipates Attainment Declaration

Fresno, CA – A ruling this past Tuesday in federal court is seen by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District as a major step forward in bringing a long-sought endorsement by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the Valley Air District's efforts to attain the federal health-based standard for airborne particulate matter that is 10 microns and smaller (PM10).

The Valley Air District recently submitted a request to the EPA to reclassify the area as in attainment for PM10. In order to meet the standard, the Valley Air District had to provide three years of data showing that PM10 concentrations did not exceed 24-hour and annual caps.

The court ruling gives the EPA three options: to impose new federal contingency measures for attainment of the PM10 standard; declare the Valley Air District in attainment for PM10; or approve the contingency measures originally identified in the Valley Air District's 2003 PM10 attainment plan, a strategy which outlines steps necessary to reach federally mandated air-quality standards. The ruling gives the EPA three and half months to take action on one of the options.

Although the ruling gives the EPA three options, the Valley Air District anticipates the likely action will be for the EPA to declare the air basin as in attainment for PM10.

The lawsuit was originally brought against the EPA by the Oakland-based environmental group EarthJustice in an effort to force the EPA to take action on the contingency measures contained in the 2003 plan or to impose a federal version of these measures. The Air District intervened in the lawsuit to protect the interests of Valley residents.

"We appreciate the thought and effort the court put into this well-reasoned decision," stated Seyed Sadredin, Executive Director of the Air District. "We have worked hard over the past few years to see major air-quality improvements, and we are encouraged that this ruling may set the stage for a final EPA declaration of attainment."

The EPA's declaration of attainment for PM10 is the final step in reaching this historic milestone. Since 1990, emissions of PM10 and its precursors have dropped 36 percent as a result of the extraordinary commitments undertaken by the Air District and the Valley's businesses, citizens and local governments

Studies have linked particulate pollution to the reduction of lung function, increased hospital and emergency room admissions, and premature deaths. Epidemiological studies have shown a direct link between exposure to PM and these adverse health effects. Substantial improvement in PM10 air quality, including three consecutive years without exceeding the health standard, is a major step forward in improving the quality of life for all Valley residents.

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: Fresno (559) 230-6000, Bakersfield (661) 326-6900 and Modesto (209) 557-6400.