

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
News Release

For Immediate Release
Nov. 12, 2003

Media Contacts: Josette Merced Bello
(559) 230-5850

Air District issues first request for voluntary wood-burning curtailment

Deteriorating air quality in the San Joaquin Valley has triggered a voluntary wood-burning curtailment in Fresno, Madera, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties for Thursday, Nov. 13. The action marks the first time a component of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's new wood-burning rule will be exercised.

The Air District forecasts levels of particulate pollution in those counties that are unhealthy for sensitive groups, including people with asthma and other respiratory ailments. The voluntary curtailment request is in effect all of tomorrow beginning at 12:01 a.m.

Under the voluntary wood-burning curtailment, the District requests the public refrain from burning wood. Residents who burn wood are encouraged to do it more cleanly by using pellet stoves, EPA Phase II-certified devices and manufactured firelogs.

"Although the wood-burning rule took effect Nov. 1, this is the first time air-quality levels are poor enough to alert the public to voluntary action," said Air Pollution Control Officer David Crow.

There are three levels in the wood-burning curtailment program:

- No restrictions: when air quality is good to moderate (0 to 100 on the Air Quality Index);
- Voluntary restrictions: when air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups (101 to 150 on the AQI); and
- Mandatory curtailment: when air quality is unhealthy for everyone (above 150 on the AQI). At this point, all solid-fuel burning, including pellets and manufactured firelogs, is prohibited upon penalty of fines.

Wintertime air pollution in the Valley is largely the result of particulate matter: tiny bits of soot, ash and other material. High levels of particulate matter can lead to serious health problems including respiratory distress and, in extreme cases, heart attacks.

The wood-burning program is in effect from Nov. 1 through Feb. 28.

Air District officials emphasize that refraining from open-hearth burning during a voluntary curtailment request may prevent the air quality from deteriorating to the point that a mandatory curtailment is issued.

Forecasts are issued daily at 4:30 p.m. for the following day. The public can get this information through the Air District's information line, 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463) and the District's website, www.valleyair.org, and through media weather reports.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call (559) 230-5800.