

## **Fireplace burning rule set to begin**

By MARK GROSSI

(Published in The Fresno and Modesto Bee - Friday., Oct. 31, 2003)

With the warm weather finally gone, it is time to think about fireplace burning and cold, foggy nights.

Saturday, the San Joaquin Valley's new wood-burning rule will begin, marking the first time local air officials have the authority to stop residents from burning wood on the most polluted nights of winter.

The rule comes with a \$290,000 public education blitz. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will use billboards and TV advertising to remind people about the rule.

It is the biggest public information campaign the district has undertaken, and it seems justified: The public is confused, say business owners who sell fireplace inserts and other hearth products.

"They think they can't burn at all anymore," said Steve Combs of Energy House in Fresno.

A worker at another store said a customer thought the rule would force him to seal his fireplace with bricks to prevent further burning. Others worry about freezing this winter because wood burning is their only source of heat.

Those thoughts are wrong.

The new rule exempts residents whose sole source of heat is wood burning. It also contains exemptions for those who live above 3,000 feet in the mountains and those who do not have access to natural gas.

And there has been no serious discussion of sealing off existing fireplaces.

"We understand that there will be some confusion," said Josette Merced Bello, district spokeswoman. "We've been working on the public education component since January."

Here is what the district wants you to know:

The rule applies on a county-by-county basis, meaning that a no-burn night could be declared in Fresno County but not in Stanislaus County.

The district's daily no-burn decisions will be based on the forecast for each county's air quality index, known as the AQI. It is a rating system ranging from healthy air at zero to a lung-searing 300 or higher.

The AQI is used to trigger two stages in the rule, the first being a voluntary curb on burning and the second a mandatory shutdown. The rule applies to many types of buildings, including houses, apartments, businesses and restaurants.

### No-burn phases

When the AQI is forecast at 100 to 150, which is considered harmful to people with sensitive lungs, the voluntary no-burning phase is triggered. The district will ask residents in affected counties to stop burning wood in open fireplaces or old wood stoves.

If people choose to burn on such days, the district encourages the use of manufactured logs, such as Duraflame, which burn much cleaner than regular firewood. Wood stoves and fireplace inserts that are federally certified are encouraged as well.

But when the AQI is projected at 151 or more, a mandatory no-burn night will be declared. Even cleaner wood-burning alternatives must not be used.

Fireplace soot, ash and other similar wood-burning pollution, called particulate matter, are primarily an urban problem, air officials said. Such pollution has been connected with heart problems and increased mortality rates.

The valley, which is one of the worst places in the country for particulate pollution, gets up to 24 tons a day of soot and ash from residential wood burning in winter, officials said.

The federal government last year required the mandatory no-burn rule for the valley as part of a legal settlement with environmentalists.

Fresno and Kern counties are expected to be the hot spots for mandatory no-burn days -- 20 or more in a winter, depending on the weather.

Conditions affect pollution

Stormy, windy weather generally means cleaner air, but fog suspends pollution in the air. In the fog, tiny bits of ash and soot can hang on for days like a dirty blanket.

Although Fresno and Bakersfield have had the most problems with fireplace smoke in the past, officials said residents throughout the valley must think before lighting up wood fires now.

"It is the residents' responsibility to check to see if it is OK before they burn," Merced Bello said.

Newspaper, TV and radio reports will tell the public when voluntary or mandatory no-burn days have been declared. Residents also can check the forecast on the air district's Web site or by calling a toll-free telephone number.

District officials said 58 field inspectors will enforce the mandatory no-burn days throughout the valley. Complaints will be investigated and citations could follow.

Fines will run from \$50 to \$1,000. The fines will increase if a resident receives additional citations.

But those consequences already have become meaningless to some residents. Hearth product business owners said many people are buying natural gas inserts, which are exempt from the rule.

Natural gas is exempt because its emissions are generally much lower than even the certified wood-burning stoves. So every day is a burn day for those who own natural gas devices.

"People are just going with the gas units," said Dianne Cloyd of Ponderosa Hearth and Home. "They don't want somebody to tell them 'No, you can't burn on these dreary, foggy days.'"

## Q&A

The San Joaquin Valley Air District's fireplace rules take effect Saturday. Among other things, the changes restrict wood burning on certain nights. Here are some of the most common questions about the changes, and the district's answers.

Q: Will the district ban fireplace burning?

A: No. The district will restrict burning on four to 25 of the most polluted nights each winter. Because restrictions will be issued only for specific areas where pollution levels are unhealthy, there is a strong likelihood that not all restricted days will affect everyone.

Q: Where will I find the daily wood-burning status for my county?

A: The Bee's Weather page will carry the information. Information will be available by telephone, 800-766-4463, and online, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

Q: Are there any exemptions to restrictions?

A: Yes:

Gas and propane

Homes in which wood burning is the sole source of heat

Devices used above 3,000 feet in elevation

Areas where natural gas service is not available

Q: How will the rule be enforced?

A: Inspectors will patrol and investigate complaints. Violators could be fined, with the penalty depending on a number of factors, including how many times a resident has been cited.

Q: Is there a big difference between newer wood-burning devices and older ones?

A: The most efficient "solid-fuel" device is a pellet stove that emits 1.2 to 1.0 grams per hour of particulate matter. A gas stove or insert releases 0.07 grams per hour. An open fireplace burning wood emits 47 grams per hour of particulate matter, compared with a fireplace with an EPA-certified insert that releases 6 grams per hour of particulate matter.

Q: How do I know if my fireplace insert or stove is EPA-certified?

A: Since 1992, the Environmental Protection Agency has regulated wood stoves and fireplace inserts. A metal sticker on the back of the appliance bears the name of the EPA with the year and month of manufacture. Anything made after July 1, 1992, is EPA-certified. More information is available online, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) and [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).

Q: Are manufactured fire logs better than burning wood?

A: Independent tests demonstrate that depending on the content of the log, burning a manufactured fire log in an open fireplace can create less particulate matter pollution than burning certain types of wood. Manufactured fire logs cannot be used in pellet stoves or wood-burning inserts, however, and they emit twice as much particulate matter per hour as burning a pellet stove or burning seasoned firewood in an EPA-certified stove or insert.

## **Valley smog season worst in 14 years Area had most unhealthy days in U.S. in 1 category.**

By Mark Grossi

The Fresno Bee

*(Published in the Fresno, Modesto Bee, The Associated Press and online in the Bakersfield Californian - Saturday, November 1, 2003)*

The sudden arrival of autumn this week -- five weeks late -- ended a long, hot summer and the San Joaquin Valley's worst smog season in 14 years.

No other place in the country had a higher number of unhealthy days in one crucial category: average smog levels over eight-hour periods. The Valley simmered above the federal health standard for 128 days, the area's highest total since 1989 when it had 133.

The major reason was a long summer and high daytime temperatures, which lingered near 90 degrees until just a few days ago. In July, when Fresno's average temperature was 5 degrees above normal, the smog level was unhealthy on 29 days -- pretty much the whole month.

The numbers demonstrate the powerful role of weather in air quality, easily overshadowing regulations and new cleanup campaigns from groups such as Valley Clean Air Now this year.

"The heat this year was not too unusual for the Valley, but we had some long stretches of it," said meteorologist Daniel Harty of the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Smog generally is a summertime problem, but it can occur on warm spring and fall days. Heat, sunlight and pollutants from combustion sources, such as cars, are a recipe for ozone, the corrosive main ingredient of smog. Ozone is a colorless gas that triggers discomfort and illness for people with lung problems. It also can cause microscopic wounds in the lungs of healthy people.

Health experts value the eight-hour measurement of ozone because it reveals the extent of exposure to this gas throughout the day.

The Valley is officially considered the second-worst place in the country for ozone pollution behind Los Angeles. The ranking is based on the one-hour smog measurement, focused on brief peaks of pollution.

While the eight-hour smog average also has been monitored for many years, the one-hour measurement has been the only standard enforced for decades.

The Los Angeles-area this year recorded a whopping 68 days above the one-hour standard, while the Valley had 37. Houston was third with 35.

Next year, however, federal officials will begin the process of enforcing the more stringent eight-hour standard and phasing out the one-hour standard. With the eight-hour standard in place, the Valley will become the worst place in the country.

Regional air quality officials have cleaned many tons of pollutants out of the Valley's air over the last 12 years, registering modest improvements in the one-hour violations but little reduction in the eight-hour violations.

Environmentalists, who have pushed a clean-air agenda in the Valley over the past two years, say that even though there have been substantial pollution reductions, the Valley needs more. "I think these 128 days of unhealthy air are bad news," said Sierra Club member Kevin Hall. "But this isn't surprising. It's a great challenge for us to clean up our air."

One of the big problems: Mountains, hot weather and lack of strong winds help keep some pollution trapped in the Valley.

The Los Angeles area daily produces twice as much pollution as the Valley, yet afternoon sea breezes often bring down readings in the late afternoon. Meanwhile, the smog keeps building through the afternoon and early evening in the relatively calm Valley air.

Some of the worst stagnant weather this year happened in September, said supervising meteorologist Evan Shipp of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. In September, the Valley broke the health standard 15 times for the one-hour standard, by far the worst month of the summer for the intense, peak violations. In July, by comparison, the Valley had only eight days when smog levels were higher than the one-hour standard.

"For most of September, we were clamped down by high pressure, and no weather systems could get through to stir up the air," Shipp said. "The number of times we exceeded the standard did not surprise me, but these were some of the latest ozone episodes I can remember."

The reporter can be reached at [mgrossi@fresnobee.com](mailto:mgrossi@fresnobee.com) or 441-6316.

## **Editorial**

### **A simple test**

#### **New wood burning rules go into effect today for the Valley.**

*(Published in the Fresno Bee - Saturday, November 1, 2003, 5:35 AM)*

New rules for residential wood-burning go into effect in the Valley today. For the sake of cleaner air, all of us need to become familiar with those rules, and to follow them. It shouldn't be hard.

Contrary to the misinformation circulating in some quarters, fireplaces and wood-burning stoves have not been banned. There will be some days between today and Feb. 28 when they may not be used, except under certain specific circumstances.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which developed the new rules and will administer them, estimates that as few as four such days and as many as 25 could occur in any given season. Violators could face fines.

There are important exemptions to the rules: where wood burning is the sole source of heat, in foothill and mountain areas above 3,000 feet and in areas where natural gas service is not available. Gas and propane devices are exempt altogether.

Fireplaces and stoves are a significant source of wintertime dust, soot and particulate matter pollution, a serious health risk.

Going without a few cozy fires each winter is a sacrifice so insignificant as to barely merit the name.

This is a useful test of our ability to clean up our own mess in the air. If we cannot muster the will to take these small steps, we will certainly fail when we try to address larger problems, such as mobile sources of pollution. Can we pass the test?

LASTGASP

"We can't go on living this way.

And we won't."

New wood-burning rules deserve a chance to help clean Valley's polluted air.

## **Missouri's sneak attack**

### **Crassly motivated Senate bill would undo efforts to clean this state's air.**

*(Published in Fresno Bee - Sunday, November 2, 2003, 5:38 AM)*

Just as California is set to begin controlling emissions from various kinds of equipment that contribute significantly to air pollution, Congress is poised to strip the state of crucial authority to do so.

Missouri Sen. Christopher Bond has attached a dangerous rider to a U.S. EPA funding bill that would bar states from regulating off-road engines under 175 horsepower. That will allow everything from diesel pumps to airport service equipment, tractors to generators, leaf blowers to chain saws to escape regulation.

The Bond amendment was written specifically to pre-empt new rules in California that would require catalytic converters and better leak-proof systems on lawn mowers and other kinds of garden equipment.

It also was written to aid Briggs & Stratton, which has two plants in Bond's home state of Missouri. The company claims California's regulations would force the company to move 22,000 manufacturing jobs overseas. That's odd. American Honda Motor Co., a California-based Briggs & Stratton competitor, supports the new regulations. If Honda can meet the standard, why not Briggs & Stratton?

According to California EPA, the state's new small engine rules would have the same impact as removing 2 million cars from state roads. Without such rules, dirty air basins such as the Valley and Los Angeles cannot achieve clean air standards mandated under the federal Clean Air Act.

To protect public health, the environment and the authority of all states to safeguard their citizens, Congress should reject Bond's dangerous rider. And if it doesn't, perhaps the people of California can send a message directly to Briggs & Stratton, bypassing the company's good and faithful Senate servant, and just buy someone else's products.

LASTGASP

"We can't go on living this way.

And we won't."

A bill in Congress threatens California's air for the sake of jobs in Missouri.

## **Letter to the Editor**

### **'Mobile' pollution sources mean more than just cars**

By Jason Paukovits

Air Quality Coordinator

Council of Fresno County Governments

Fresno

*(Published in the Fresno Bee -Monday, November 3, 2003, 5:37 AM)*

Earl Hudson [letter Oct. 23] asked why the new \$1 registration surcharge for air quality is not focused on the "single biggest culprit ... cars"? His letter demonstrates there is a key misconception about pollution sources in this Valley.

You often hear that 50% to 70% of total ozone pollution is from "motor vehicles" or "mobile sources"; contrary to popular belief, this figure does not include only cars, trucks and buses. Off-road mobile sources (farm and construction equipment) are part of the equation, contributing to more than 20% of Valley's ozone pollution.

The remainder of mobile source ozone emissions comes from a combination of on-road vehicles (approximately 30% to 35%), including cars and light-duty trucks (SUVs) at 15% and heavy-duty trucks at another 15%. We must continue to make technology improvements and consider the impact of vehicle miles traveled from these sources. However, we need to be clear about the facts.

Farm, construction and yard equipment are only a few examples of off-road "mobile" sources. The state Air Resources Board stated in a Bee article that running a single gas-powered lawn mower for an hour is "like driving 40 cars for an hour." Since 1970, new emission standards for cars resulted in significant reductions, while standards for trucks and most off-road equipment are still being implemented.

Air district funding is based primarily on achieving the most pollution reduction for the lowest cost. No single source pollutes enough that a 100% reduction in that particular area will result in clean air; all sources must be accountable.

### **No-burn issue heats up**

By LAURA A. MALDONADO, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian

e-mail: [lmaldonado@bakersfield.com](mailto:lmaldonado@bakersfield.com)

Thursday October 30, 2003, 09:10:14 PM

Fireplace and wood stove owners hoping to enjoy the crackle of roaring fires will need to watch for no-light nights or face fines under tightened restrictions from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District that begin Saturday.

The effort, district officials say, is not to freeze people out of their homes but to curb the rising levels of particles in the air that medical experts say make it difficult to breathe.

"Most homes do have other sources of heat," said Kelly Hogan Malay, public information officer with the air district.

Farmers likewise will need to call in to check the ag burn status in a transition to a Smoke Management Program, air district officials said. Farmers must call the phone number on their burn permits for details on their specific crops and locations.

The tighter restrictions may only be in effect from four to 25 days between Saturday and Feb. 28, but for some Bakersfield residents, that's still too much.

"You can't have the government dictating everything," said David Lightsey, a physical therapist in Bakersfield who also works with the National Council Against Health Fraud.

"We all want cleaner air, but I think they're barking up the wrong tree," Lightsey said, asserting it's the amount and duration of exposure to such elements as benzene that determine whether fine particulates are harmful.

Another resident, Roy Waterhouse, is equally bothered by the restrictions.

"The bigger issue for me isn't just that I'm adamant about burning a fire. (The air district) needs to do something about other industries that pollute our air more," Waterhouse said, pointing to the agricultural industry or pollutants coming from other areas of the state.

"If it's a no-burn day and it's Thanksgiving or Christmas, I'm going to burn (wood in my fireplace)," Waterhouse said of his determination to fight the rule. "If it goes to court, I'll be there. It really irks me they're coming down on the little guy when big business seems to be able to do business as usual."

The air district, however, says that's not the case.

Smog-forming emissions from businesses and industrial sources have been significantly reduced, according to data on the air district's Web site.

However, the San Joaquin Valley still does not meet federal health-based standards. Thus, the wood-burning ban is being introduced in hopes of curbing the 24 tons of particulate matter emitted from fireplaces daily during the winter.

For residents who expect everyone to share the sacrifice, the air district has set up a compliance hot line similar to the one that already exists to report such irritants as smoking cars.

"We get calls all the time," Malay said of the public's willingness to report violators. Each year, the Valley Air District receives 3,000 complaints concerning air pollution from the public.

With nearly 30 compliance officers on hand during the day and two at night in the Bakersfield office alone, chances are violators will eventually be caught.

The district also has two other regional offices covering the San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties and Madera, Fresno and Kings counties.

"We're going to be out looking around on surveillance," compliance director Bob Kard said.

A toll-free number will take anonymous, detailed reports. Staff will then verify addresses and send out notices. Fines range from \$50 to \$1,000 and depend on the frequency of violations.

Although Lightsey and Waterhouse say they would never use the compliance hot line, others, such as Bakersfield resident and former physician Arthur Unger, would have no problem with it. Unger is also a member of the Kern-Kaweah Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Unger compares smoke emitting from a fireplace or wood stove to sewage removed via a home's plumbing system. If a sewer line is backed up, it creates a health hazard. Likewise, when the air quality index shows high levels of pollutants exist, it affects people's health, he said.

"If I smell a smell like feces, I'm calling the health department," Unger said. "If something's coming out of your house at me, such as smoke in the air that can damage my health, I'm calling."

"We don't want to create situations where neighbors are feuding with each other," Malay said, "but it's important we all make sacrifices. It's a health issue."

Not everyone will be required to go without their wood stoves, however.

Those who have no other heat source, or live above 3,000 feet are exempt. The same applies for buildings where no natural gas or propane service is available. Gas-burning devices are also exempt.

The tighter rules require that older wood stoves be removed or upgraded when a home is sold. There are restrictions that reduce the number of wood-burning devices in new housing developments as well.

Kern County's Building Industry Association supports those limits.

"(Wood-burning fireplaces) just aren't as important in the buying of a home," said BIA vice president Brian Todd. "Most people don't want to be dragging wood through their homes anymore. (But) the whole reason for this is, we've just got to clean up the air."

## **Visalia Unified, EPA to offer workshops on indoor air quality**

By Shannon Darling, The Visalia Times-Delta

Nov. 3, 2003

Visalia Unified School District and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced they will come together to teach schools and community agencies how to build trust with residents and help improve indoor air quality.

The Wednesday workshop will address the unique challenges schools and community agencies face to ensure safe and healthy environments. The EPA's Tools for Schools program has been implemented in Visalia schools for almost four years.

The workshop will provide skills necessary for building trust with the community regarding environmental concerns.

The half-day training session will be at the Visalia Learning Center, Conference Room 9, 630 S. Atwood Court. Information: 730-7529.

## **Burning limits are now the law**

Saturday, November 01, 2003

By David Chircop, Merced Sun-Star

A mandatory program prohibiting wood-burning in fireplaces and stoves on certain days begins this afternoon in eight Central Valley counties - including Merced.

The program which requires residents to "check before they burn" is similar to the voluntary program in place for the last 10 years - except for one thing. Burning on non-burn days can carry a substantial fine.

Levying fines ranging from \$50 to \$100 depending on the number and type of offense, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is putting teeth in its initiative to reduce winter air pollution.

Thanks in part to its geography, the San Joaquin Valley has among the worst smog and particulate-laden air in the country.

Josette Merced Bello, a spokeswoman with the district, said that not enough people participated in the voluntary program to reduce pollution created by fireplaces and wood-burning stoves .

"For that reason the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) determined that the Valley had to implement a mandatory wood-burning curtailment program," she said.

From Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, the air district will prohibit burning solid fuels when and where air quality is expected to be unhealthy (an Air Quality Index of 151 or higher).

Solid fuels are anything made out of wood, manufactured fire logs and pellets.

The following are exempt from the new requirements:

- Households that depend on wood burning as their only source of heat;
- Devices used at elevations above 3,000 feet;
- Areas where natural gas service is not available.

Based on historical data, there will likely be between four and 25 no burn days this season.

For low-income residents who burn wood as a cheaper alternative to natural gas, Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has special assistance programs for those who qualify.

Daily wood-burning status can be checked at 1-800-SMOG-INFO (766-4463) or [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

The air district has also launched a \$300 campaign to keep residents informed. Newspaper, television and radio notices in English, Spanish and Hmong are part of that outreach effort.

While the mandatory no-burn days will go into effect when air quality is at very unhealthy levels, the air district will ask residents to voluntarily refrain from burning when air quality is forecast to be at levels unhealthy for sensitive groups (an Air Quality Index of 101 to 150).

It is hoped voluntary efforts not to burn on days when air quality is declining will reduce the number of no-burn days.

Valleywide, the air district hires 58 inspectors to perform surveillance and to investigate air pollution complaints.

Equating the new policy to speed limits along Highway 99, Bello said she would prefer people comply before they are fined.

“Our preference is to educate rather than regulate,” she said. “In the end, though, it really is the residents’ responsibility to check.”

If the Valley follows the pattern set by a program started in Reno 10 years ago, the learning curve will smooth out after the first year. Bello said citations haven’t been issued in that area for nine years.

## **New residential wood-burning program begins this weekend**

### **Farmers must call to learn ag-burn status**

Saturday, November 01, 2003

Special to the Madera Tribune

A new wood-burning program designed to reduce air pollution created by fireplaces and wood heaters begins this weekend in all eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Also this weekend, the district will begin issuing the agricultural burn status to farmers by telephone only.

From Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, the Valley Air District will prohibit the burning of solid fuels in fireplaces and heaters when and where air quality is expected to be unhealthy (an Air Quality Index of 151 or higher).

Residents are urged to “Check Before You Burn” in order to avoid fines and help improve air quality. Solid fuels include wood, pellets and manufactured firelogs. The restrictions don’t apply to natural gas or propane devices.

Also beginning Nov. 1, the Air District will begin transitioning to a smoke management program for farmers with agricultural burn permits. Instead of receiving the ag-burn status through public announcements, farmers can obtain the ag-burn determination for their specific crops and locations by calling the phone number on their permits.

The new fireplace and wood heater restrictions apply to residents and businesses in Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties. The restrictions will be issued county-by-county depending on local air quality conditions. When a restriction is issued, it will be in effect for 24 hours - from midnight to midnight on the affected day.

Based on historical data, wood-burning restrictions likely will affect different counties between four and 25 days each season.

Starting Saturday afternoon, residents can find their county’s daily wood-burning status by calling 1-800-SMOG-INFO (766-4463) or logging onto [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). The air district also will provide the daily status to newspapers and radio and television stations valley-wide.

While most residences and businesses - including lodges and restaurants - are subject to the prohibitions, exemptions apply to:

- Gas and propane devices or wood-burning cook stoves.
- Homes in which wood burning is the sole source of heat (no other heating device is built into the home).
- Devices used above 3,000 feet in elevation.
- Areas where natural gas service is not available.

Air District inspectors will perform surveillance and investigate complaints. Violations of the wood-burning prohibitions can result in fines. To avoid fines, Valley residents are encouraged to check before lighting a solid fuel fire.

To report violations, residents may call:

1-800-281-7003 in San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties.

1-800-870-1037 in Madera, Fresno and Kings counties.

1-800-926-5550 in Tulare and the valley portion of Kern counties.

In order to prevent the need for mandatory restrictions, the Air District will notify the public when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy for sensitive groups (an Air Quality Index of 101 to 150). At that level, residents are asked to voluntarily refrain from burning solid fuels or to burn them as cleanly as possible by using EPA Phase II-certified devices, pellet stoves or manufactured firelogs. If air quality continues to deteriorate, the District will then issue mandatory restrictions.

When mandatory solid fuel-burning restrictions are not in place, residents can reduce air pollution caused by their wood fires by following these tips:

- Replace old solid fuel-burning equipment with cleaner Phase II or pellet-fueled devices. Or, install natural gas or propane devices, which are not subject to Air District wood-burning rules.
- Ensure firewood is clean, seasoned and dry before burning it. Green, unseasoned wood smolders and creates additional emissions.
- For an ambience fire in an open fireplace, a manufactured firelog may be a cleaner alternative to wood.
- Never burn trash, magazines, newspapers, plastics or other materials not designed to burn in a fireplace or stove. Doing so is illegal and hazardous.
- Burn denser woods. They take longer to ignite, but burn slower and more evenly.
- Keep fireplaces and wood stoves properly maintained. Chimneys should be cleaned and inspected periodically.

Sunday, Nov. 2, Modesto Bee  
**Cooldown scours valley air**

By MARK GROSSI

## THE FRESNO BEE

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Suffering in September

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Friday, Oct. 31, The Record - Editorial

## **A burning issue**

### **New air-quality restrictions might be intrusive, but they're necessary**

If you haven't been paying attention to regulations regarding wood-burning stoves and fireplaces, heads up.

The new rules go into effect on Saturday.

From Nov. 1 until Feb. 29, wood burning will be prohibited when air quality reaches an unhealthy level.

Before you get too excited, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials think that will happen only five or six times this winter at this end of the Valley.

Still, those who love a crackling wood fire on a cold December evening need to check first to be sure it's OK. Violations can result in fines up to \$1,000 for homeowners.

There are three ways to check:

- \* Call (800) SMOG-INFO, which is (800) 766-4463.
- \* Check the Internet at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).
- \* Read The Record's Weather Page, where no-burn days will be designated.

Until now, the Valley's rare no-burn nights were voluntary. Due to pressure from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, that's no longer true.

Like the rules or not, there's no denying the health hazards that accompany each winter's haze. On particularly cold nights, fireplaces account for up to 30 percent of Valley pollution.

There are three levels:

- \* No restrictions: When air quality is good or moderate, no limits will be in place.
- \* Wood burning discouraged: When air quality is expected to be unhealthy, Valley residents will be asked to voluntarily refrain from burning solid fuels.
- \* Wood burning prohibited: When air quality is poor, wood burning will be illegal.

We encourage compliance in every affected community. Some residents are angry at this intrusion into their private lives.

While we understand those concerns, there's little doubt air quality has gotten worse as the Valley's population has grown. It impacts all of us.

Just as we've urged stronger efforts by agriculture, automobile manufacturers and business, homeowners with wood-burning stoves now must become part of the campaign against dirty air.

Sat., Nov. 1, Lodi News Sentinel

### **Smog choking the life out of Sequoia, Yosemite**

Moro Rock beckoned, a mountain of stone promising an astonishing vista. The rock is one of the most popular attractions at Sequoia National Park, where the largest living things in the world stand in primordial majesty.

I hiked the winding 400 steps, carved years ago by crews from the old Civilian Conservation Corps.

At the top, my lungs heaving, I stood against a rail and gazed out upon a vast and incredible scene of ... smog.

Moro Rock was like an island surrounded by an ocean of gunk. Granted, some of the stuff was smoke from fires being allowed to burn away forest debris.

But most of the haze was unmistakable.

Ugly, brownish, yucky smog.

A few days earlier, visiting Yosemite, my son Alex and I had noticed, along with the granite wonders of the Yosemite Valley, a light veil of pollution.

We had a great trip, hiking along Tenaya Creek in Yosemite and wandering through the Giant Grove in Sequoia. We saw waterfalls and the incredible trees, lots of deer and even an odd cat-like fellow known as a marmot.

But the smog was inescapable.

Returning home, I did some research and learned an alarming fact: Many of our national parks are afflicted with smog.

Sequoia, in the southern Sierra east of Fresno, is one of the worst in the nation. Due to a wicked quirk of chemistry, its air quality is often more noxious than that of Fresno or even Los Angeles. And Yosemite is not far behind.

Walk into a visitor center in Sequoia and you learn about black bears and caves -- and whether the air is safe enough for children and the elderly to take a brisk walk in the woods.

Often, it is not.

During the 2003 smog season, running from May through October, Sequoia established a dubious new record: 81 days when the air quality exceeded state and federal standards.

So consider this unhappy circumstance: You drive the family to Sequoia to hike through the most massive and glorious trees on the planet, and the smog is so bad that little Jimmy and grandpa have to wait at the picnic table. (Sequoia, by the way, is home to the General Sherman tree, the biggest tree, heft-wise, on the globe. It is 275 feet tall and more than 30 feet across at the base. Knock it over, and it would stretch nearly all the way across a football field.)

I talked on the phone with Annie Esperanza, an air quality specialist with Sequoia. She is a bright and articulate type and she did not mince words.

"The situation should make people angry," she said. "Like you, a lot of people are shocked by what they see when they climb to the top of Moro Rock."

The problem is smog, all right. More specifically, Esperanza said, it is ozone, and it has sickened many of the trees in Sequoia and Yosemite. The ozone clogs up the process of photosynthesis, affecting how the trees can grow and survive. Most vulnerable are the so-called yellow pines, including Ponderosas and Jeffreys. In Sequoia, 50 percent of these pines show signs of ozone-itis.

Thankfully, the big guys, the mature Sequoias, seem to be OK. Most are 1,000 years or older and stand as high as 20-story buildings. In the parlance of pop culture, they are survivors.

But Esperanza said studies of baby Sequoias shows that they aren't as tolerant of the ozone as their older, stouter relatives. Will current generations of Sequoias grow to be towering and awesome?

The parks people are worried. With the pines gasping and toppling, and the Sequoia youngsters showing signs of weakness, the whole forest system, including the ancient thick-barked giants, may be in jeopardy.

Esperanza said the smog is mainly coming from the valley, though a bit of it can be blamed on the Bay Area.

Ironically, ozone levels die down at night in urban areas. Under the cover of darkness, some chemicals produced more or less continuously in cities by cars and factories actually reduce the ozone.

That doesn't happen in Sequoia or Yosemite, where the ozone levels get high and stay high, often above those in cities like Fresno or Bakersfield.

One saving grace is that ozone abates during the winter and early spring in both Sequoia and Yosemite. But come summer and early fall, when many folks are streaming to the mountains for inspiration and fresh air, they get bracing lungs-full of ozone instead.

What can be done? The obvious, said Esperanza. Drive less, support mass transit, think about tooling around in smaller, more efficient vehicles. When efforts are made to improve air quality, join them.

"This wasn't created by one car or one factory," she said. "We all have responsibility here."

Friday, Oct. 31, Lodi News Sentinel

New wood-burning rules hardly effect county

By [Ross Farrow <mailto:rossf@lodinews.com>](mailto:rossf@lodinews.com)/News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Lodi and the remainder of the San Joaquin Valley are likely to face only three days this winter in which they will not be allowed to use your fireplace or wood-burning stove.

The no-burn days are part of new regulations by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which extends from San Joaquin County to Kern County. The new regulations begin Saturday.

"A lot of people sees those regulations and see that a right is being taken away," district spokesman Anthony Presto said. "It's not something they need to be fearful of."

Nevertheless, confusion has reigned over the new regulations, with some residents thinking they wouldn't be able to use their fireplaces or wood-burning stoves at all, said Brad Goehring, who sells firewood at his east Lodi ranch.

Customers asked Goehring and his business partner, Markus Bokisch, about the new regulations so often this year that they mailed a letter explaining the rules to 1,400 customers.

"It is our belief the expected curtailments for San Joaquin County will have little or no effect in regards to your wood-burning activity," Goehring and Bokisch said in their letter.

The Indian summer conditions that dominated October nearly caused Saturday to become a no-burn day, Presto said.

However, the breezy conditions on Wednesday and Thursday saved the day, thereby allowing residents to use their fireplaces over the weekend, Presto said.

As one goes farther south in the Valley, the number of no-burn days increases. Modesto is expected to have about six no-burn days, while Fresno and Bakersfield, with their more stagnant air, will have about 25 no-burn days between November and February, Presto said.

As long as it's raining or you feel some wind, you can burn firewood to your heart's content, Presto said. But if the area is hit with tule fog for a few days, chances are that the no-burn days will kick in, he said.

Fog isn't needed to produce no-burn days, Presto said. Just stale air, he said.

The new regulations taking effect this year are intended to reduce asthma and heart problems, Presto said. There's a good chance that in populated areas, someone who lives near you has asthma and a heart condition. Breathing wood on a smoggy day reduces lung function, which in turn causes the heart to beat with greater difficulty, Presto said.

People exempt from the no-burn regulations include people who have no other means of heating their homes, live at 3,000-foot elevation or higher and areas where natural gas and propane service are not available, according to the Air Pollution Control District.

District officials will only be able to inform residents whether the next day is a no-burn day, Presto said. That notice will only be available in the late-afternoon.

For more information, call (800) SMOG-INFO or see the Web site at [www.valleyair.com](http://www.valleyair.com) <<http://www.valleyair.com>>.