

Valley wood-burning restrictions begin today

By Sarah Elizabeth Villicana, staff writer
The Porterville Recorder, Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2005

Wood-burning restrictions, which begin today, are one way to help Valley residents breath a little easier.

During the fall and winter months, air quality in the Central Valley is among the worst in the nation and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District advises residents to check air quality status before lighting fireplaces and pellet stoves.

"Check Before You Burn," a program prohibiting the use of wood burning on certain days, begins its third season today and will continue through the end of February.

According to the Air Pollution Control District, uncontrolled residential wood burning throughout the Valley can potentially create 24 tons of particulate matter per day. Exposure to high concentrations of particulate matter, known as PM10, can trigger heart attacks, increase risk for lung cancer and aggravate respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Violations of the Air District's rules for wood burning can result in fines, however, in its first two seasons Tulare County experienced just two days mandatory restrictions. Fresno County saw the most days of prohibited burning at four; and Kings County reported restrictions on at least seven days. A total of 44 notices have been issued in the past to violators of the curtailments.

Monday was the first time residents could check their county's wood-burning status during the current season. Burn status information can be obtained by phone or on-line.

Status is updated daily and Air District inspectors are responsible for surveillance and investigation of complaints in all eight of the counties covered by the district. Violations of the wood-burning restrictions can result in fines ranging from \$50 to \$1,000.

"If it's the first time, it's likely to be at the low end of the scale," said Janelle Schneider, a public representative for the air district. "Of course, if they're doing something egregious, like burning tires, then the fine is going to be higher."

The no-burn days do not apply to homes in which wood burning is the sole source of heat, where natural gas service is not available and in homes above 3,000 feet. Restriction apply to all other homes, businesses and lodges.

Updates are available by telephone in English and Spanish, at (800) 766-4463, for Hmong call toll (877) 344-1212. Status is also available at www.valleyair.org.

To report violations call (800) 926-5550.

IN BRIEF LOS ANGELES COUNTY / LOS ANGELES

Air Quality Board to Address Ports' Pollution

From Times Staff and Wire Reports
LA Times, November 3, 2005

Air pollution caused by the Los Angeles-Long Beach seaport complex will be addressed in Long Beach on Friday by the board of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

The ports rank as the region's largest air polluter.

The board meeting, the first held away from AQMD headquarters in more than 25 years, will begin at 9 a.m. at Long Beach City Hall, 333 W. Ocean Blvd. Members of the public are invited to speak from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

[Editorial, Merced Sun-Star, Nov. 3, 2005](#)

Our View: Wood burning creates dirty air

While it might save money, fireplace created pollution harms our lungs, could lead to death

Most San Joaquin Valley residents understand there's a trade-off when they light up their wood-burning fireplaces in the cold winter months. Their houses may be a bit warmer, but the air quality outside is definitely poorer.

One of the reasons the Valley is about to meet the health standard for PM-10 -- the tiny and dangerous specks of ash, soot, dirt and chemicals -- is the region's enlightenment over the consequences of fireplace burning. We've done so well that the PM-10 standard in the Valley will be met if there are no violations between now and Dec. 31.

Unfortunately, expected higher-priced heating bills could work against meeting the standard if residents try to save money on heating their homes by burning wood.

"Without a doubt, all of us are bracing for the anticipated jump in natural-gas prices this winter," says David Crow, executive director for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "But it's as important as ever to stop and think before lighting a fire."

The San Joaquin Valley has become one of the dirtiest air basins in the country, and has never met the federal standard for PM-10 pollution. Now that we are poised to achieve this important milestone, it's crucial that residents continue to do their part by not burning wood.

The air district issues alerts calling for voluntary wood-burning cutbacks on bad-air days and on days when the air gets unhealthy for most people, air officials ban wood burning altogether. Consider the consequences before you burn this winter.

If you are worried about the cost of heating your home, this winter's increase can easily be offset by making fewer trips in your cars, especially when gasoline is at \$3 a gallon. And reducing our driving will also help clean up the air. That makes sense. Burning wood doesn't.

Today, the air district will begin its third season of enforcing wood-burning restrictions on a county-by-county basis from Stockton to Bakersfield. Wintertime wood burning in the Valley can put as much as 24 tons of particulate matter into the air each day.

This is not some bureaucratic exercise. The particles of pollution can lodge in human lungs and do serious damage, even causing heart attacks and premature death. Particulate pollution can also trigger the onset of asthma, which makes the problem especially acute for young, growing children. Already one child in six in Fresno County shows symptoms of asthma.

Fireplaces may appear to make our houses cozy, but they are dangerous when we burn wood in them. We can solve our air quality problems in the Valley if we all are willing to make minor sacrifices.

[Selected recent California newspaper editorials](#)

By The Associated Press

in the S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, Nov. 3, 2005

AP – Nov. 1

Fresno Bee: "Don't light your fire"

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[Editorial in the LA Times, November 3, 2005](#)

Parks vs. profits

THERE IS AN OLD JEWISH TALE about a man living in a small hut with his wife, six children and mother-in-law. At his wits' end, he goes to a rabbi, who advises him to bring his goat into the house. Next week, the chickens. Then the cow. When the man can no longer stand the noise, crowding and odor, the rabbi tells him to take all the animals out - and suddenly the house feels spacious and quiet.

What brings the story to mind are recent efforts in Washington to change the way our national parks and other federal lands are managed. Two dreadful proposals to strip protections from public land were modified after protest. Now they are simply very bad.

In August, the Interior Department proposed new rules that would have defined livestock grazing and mining as legitimate uses of national parks, even those as important to this nation's heritage and tourism as Yellowstone. The rules also would have allowed liberal use of noisy, polluting off-road vehicles and snowmobiles in the parks. The plan's author, Paul Hoffman, deputy assistant Interior secretary, advocated greater use of snowmobiles in Yellowstone in his former job as director of the Chamber of Commerce in Cody, Wyo.

The revised proposal removes the cows and the chickens, but it still smells of goat. It does not openly allow mining or grazing, but it would weaken standards on [air quality](#) and noise pollution in the parks. More important, it would change an important policy dating to 1918 that said conservation must take priority over recreation when there is a clash between the two. That's simply sound stewardship; without conservation, parks would become so dilapidated by overuse that there would be little left for future generations to enjoy.

Hoffman said his first plan was intended to stimulate discussion. We say there are more thoughtful ways to get a discussion going.

Then there is a proposal by Rep. Richard Pombo (R-Tracy), who several weeks ago floated the idea of selling off more than a dozen national parks. In response to the predictable public outrage, Pombo's office said it was all just a joke. But then he produced serious, and almost equally unacceptable, legislation that would allow the federal government to sell land, including property in national forests, for \$1,000 an acre to mining and drilling interests.

The buyers wouldn't even have to show that there are minerals on the property; they could eventually use it for, say, real estate development. This amounts to a giveaway of public land for private gain.

Pombo has already used this ploy with an earlier "plan" he floated to gut the Endangered Species Act. No bill came from that plan, but Pombo has since introduced legislation that simply damages the act irreparably with a giveaway to any property owners whose land is critical habitat for a rare bird or plant.

Surveys have shown that Americans treasure their national parks and forests and want them preserved. Demands for weakening federal protection of the land come not from the public but from industry. Compliant politicians and officials should not despoil land that belongs to the public with their metaphorical (or not) livestock - and then expect the public to be grateful when they take away the cows and chickens but leave the goats.

[Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Thurs. Nov. 3, 2005](#)

What happens to air pollution fees?

Isn't it enough that the pseudoscientists in the air pollution control business collect millions in fees from auto owners? Now they want millions more from dairies, wine fermentation, farmers' dust and the construction business and developers. What will be next?

The Bee could do a great service demanding an accountability of what happens to these millions of dollars in fees. It is my opinion that these dollars go to high salaries and molecule-counting equipment to let us all know that the air is bad.

How do fees clean up air that will never totally be clean? Fees are only perpetuating an entrenched bureaucracy that will exist as long as we have air.

HARRY J. CROMPE, Modesto