

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

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sections**

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Caution urged in valley portion of Kern

Air District issues health cautionary statement due to poor air quality

(Bakersfield, CA) – High concentrations of particulate matter in several Valley counties are resulting in unhealthy air quality, warns the Valley Air District.

Levels of PM2.5 – the smallest form of particulate matter, which can have serious health effects – have been rising over the past few days and are expected to remain high in the southern and central San Joaquin Valley. These high levels of particulate matter have resulted in several no-burn days, and Tuesday marked the first time burning has been prohibited in all valley counties.

PM2.5 levels have been highest in the valley portion of Kern County, which had an updated forecast today of 170 on the Air Quality Index. An AQI reading of 151 or higher is considered unhealthy for the general public. The forecast for tomorrow in the valley portion of Kern is an AQI of 169.

The forecast for Wednesday also puts air quality in Tulare, Kings and Fresno counties in the unhealthy range. Air quality in the northern counties of Madera, Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin is forecast to be unhealthy for sensitive groups.

Wood-burning status

Due to the expected poor air quality, wood burning is prohibited on Wednesday in Tulare, Kings, Fresno and the valley portion of Kern counties. Wood burning is discouraged on a voluntary basis in Madera, Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties.

Exceptions to the mandatory curtailments include devices that use natural gas or propane exclusively; homes that don't have connections to natural-gas service; homes in areas 3,000 feet or higher in elevation; homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat; and cooking devices.

Health effects

PM2.5 can exacerbate existing lung ailments and, according to recent research, trigger heart attacks. The tiny components of PM2.5, which measure 2.5 millionths of a meter or smaller, include nitrates, salts, soot, smoke and other byproducts of combustion.

To protect themselves from the effects of poor air quality, residents should check the air-quality forecast daily and adjust their activities accordingly.

When air quality is in the Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups range (an AQI of 101 – 150), people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should cut back or reschedule strenuous activities, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. When air quality is in the Unhealthy range (an AQI of 151 – 200), *everyone* should cut back or reschedule strenuous activities, while people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid strenuous activities altogether.

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