

Air warning in effect for Stanislaus County through Wednesday

Staff reports

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2013

STANISLAUS COUNTY — The first air alert of 2013 for Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Merced and other valley counties began Monday and is in effect through Wednesday.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District declares air alerts when conditions that lead to ozone formation — increased emissions, high temperatures and stagnant air flow — develop. Episodes of late-summer high ozone are correlated to back-to-school traffic and increased vehicle idling.

High ozone levels are harmful to health and put the valley at risk for exceeding the one-hour federal ozone standard, which can trigger an annual \$29 million penalty. This penalty is paid by valley drivers in the form of a \$12 addition to their DMV registration fee plus increased fees on businesses.

"Since this program was initiated two years ago, we have had positive response from valley residents and businesses, who understand that cooperating to minimize one-hour ozone pays big dividends year-round," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive officer and air pollution control officer, in a news release.

For Modesto and Turlock on Monday evening, the district's online air advisory network rated two types of pollution — ozone and fine particulate matter — both as moderate, meaning sensitive individuals should reduce prolonged and/or vigorous outdoor activities. To check air quality at any time, go to www.valleyair.org. The air quality forecast for today is good for Stanislaus and Merced counties, but moderate for San Joaquin County.

Steps residents can take to reduce ozone levels include taking a bus or riding a bike instead of driving, walking children to and from school (or at least refraining from idling when dropping off and picking up students), avoiding yard work with gasoline-powered equipment, carpooling, linking trips — doing all errands at once — or postponing errands, and avoiding drive-throughs.

Air pollution control alert from Lodi to Bakersfield

By News-Sentinel Staff

Lodi News Sentinel, Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2013

The San Joaquin Valley from Lodi to Bakersfield has been designated as an area of high air pollution through Wednesday.

Residents should avoid idling when dropping off or picking up students, and they should refrain from using drive-through services, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The district encourages carpooling and using public transportation, and employers should shift operations to early morning or late evening, when ozone levels are lower, according to the air pollution district. Employers should also offer flexible work schedules through Wednesday.

For more information, call 209-557-6400 or visit www.valleyair.org or www.healthyliving.com.

[Bakersfield Californian commentary, Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2013:](#)

Can a city's layout promote residents' health? You bet

By Tamira Smith Lopez

Our lungs know all too well that Kern County is home to some of the most polluted air in America. The recent American Lung Association State of the Air report placed Kern among the top three most polluted counties in the nation for ozone and first overall for particulate pollution. Not only can we see it, but we can feel it in our chests and eyes. Kids and the elderly suffer the most -- today, one in six Kern County children live with asthma. Too many of our kids grow up struggling to breathe, with lungs that don't function the way they are supposed to. It is a burden that our kids shouldn't have to live with, or move away from Kern County to avoid.

It's not just poor lung health that affects our children, it's a sedentary lifestyle worsened by communities planned for commuting in cars. As a health educator, I see people every day struggling with poor health in

Kern County. And, sadly, I see children following parents down unhealthy paths. It's heartbreaking, but there's something all of us can do about it, and I am hopeful that we can blaze a new trail for our kids, and for our community. The prescription: A healthier, more walkable and bikeable community with better planned neighborhoods that offer alternatives to sitting in traffic. Lung Association research has found that planning and building healthier communities could help California cut more than 132,000 tons of air pollution and avoid up to 140 premature deaths and 105,000 asthma attacks annually in 2035. Planning less auto-centered communities that encourage physical activity also could help reduce obesity, diabetes, heart and lung disease and other chronic conditions here in Kern County.

Sadly, more than four in 10 kids are obese in Kern County. In fact, our county ranks second to last among all California counties for deaths due to heart disease as well as for deaths due to diabetes. We are in the bottom five for deaths due to chronic lower respiratory disease. I want to help build a Kern County where kids can grow up healthy and avoid these terrible burdens that harm our community. Where we live matters. Safe and convenient sidewalks and bike paths that connect homes to jobs, schools and shopping could eliminate getting into the car for every short trip and provide an easy way to get exercise. If our kids can walk to school because it's built close to home, they can safely engage in physical activity on a daily basis. As someone who grew up in this area, I'd prefer to see it become easier to access fresh and nutritious fruits and vegetables grown locally, than get into the car to visit a drive-by takeout window. Put simply, communities that offer opportunities for health are well-planned communities.

Recent research has found that if the Valley as a whole can grow in healthier ways, we could see over \$340 million in avoided health costs by cutting traffic pollution and more than 21,000 respiratory symptoms. But we have to plan to get there and we need to start now.

The Kern Council of Governments is currently shaping possible plans for the neighborhoods that Kern kids will grow up in and where they will raise their own kids one day. We owe it to ourselves to get involved. Attend one of Kern COG'S public workshops, Aug. 21 or Aug. 27, and us figure out which future will bring the best, healthiest communities to reality and let our elected officials know what we want.

The American Lung Association in California supports the plan that offers the most new bike lanes, sidewalks and transit service that promote healthy lifestyles and thriving downtowns. I will support the plan that has the most housing options built within walking distance to services like health care, shopping, transit and jobs so that people are able to spend less time driving to work and more time with their kids. I hope you will, too.

Tamira Smith Lopez, MPA, of Bakersfield is a health educator and Area Director for the American Lung Association's Bakersfield office.