

Stay inside. Wildfires making the Modesto air dangerous to breathe

By Deke Farrow

Modesto Bee, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017

Social media is abuzz with posts from fire, air and law-enforcement posts telling Valley residents where the blanket of smoke in the air is coming from.

"Drift smoke from the fires burning all over California is settling in our area. There are currently no fires within the city of Turlock. Our dispatch is currently receiving numerous calls for the smell of smoke," the Turlock Fire Department posted on Facebook on Wednesday morning.

"Seeing and smelling smoke in Patterson? It's drifting into the Valley from several large fires currently burning to the north of us," Patterson Police Services posted. Modesto Fire issued much the same message.

The Modesto Police Department tweeted, "The smoke in and around Modesto is from the Northern California wildfires. For health reasons, stay inside."

The Northern San Joaquin Valley is being impacted by fires to the north in Solano, Sonoma and Napa counties, said Anthony Presto, spokesman at the Modesto office of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. "The inversion layer is giving us heavy impacts."

Anyone in an area where they can see or smell smoke should stay inside as much as possible, Presto said. That's especially true for sensitive groups like children, the elderly and people with asthma or other respiratory conditions. If possible, those people are urged to stay indoors until the wildfires are extinguished, he said.

The entire San Joaquin Valley is under an air district health caution because the Lion fire also continues in Tulare County, Presto said.

All schools in the Modesto City Schools district are on a rainy-day schedule, meaning "students are kept indoors during recess, lunch and P.E.," said district spokeswoman Becky Fortuna.

All outdoor athletic events and practices have been canceled, she added. "In addition to any football or golf practices, we had the (Modesto Metro Conference) cross country meet and Enochs had a powder puff game scheduled for today."

The Sylvan Union School District also messaged students' families that it also is enforcing rainy-day schedules at all sites.

Smoke from fires can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, the air district warned. "Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure," it said in a news release.

Residents can check the district's wildfire page at <http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires> for information about any current wildfires and whether they are affecting the Valley.

Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

Wednesday afternoon, the RAAN page was at the highest level – Level 5/very unhealthy – for fine particulate matter concentration. "Everyone should avoid outdoor activity if possible," it said.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the district office in Modesto, 209- 557-6400.

Valley air pollution district says smoke from NorCal, Sierra fires could cause problems

Fresno Bee, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017

San Joaquin Valley air pollution officials are warning that smoke from the Northern California wildfires coupled with smoke from a big Tulare County wilderness fire could affect local skies.

The Lion Fire in the Sierra mountains of far eastern Tulare County, caused by a lightning strike Sept. 24, had grown to 12,850 acres by Tuesday morning. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said smoke from that fire is most likely to cause problems in the region's foothills.

Several wildfires erupted Sunday night in Northern California, the worst in Santa Rosa.

Overall, the Valley's air quality was considered moderate Tuesday. Still, the air district issued a Valley-wide cautionary statement warning that smoke from fires can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move inside to an air-conditioned environment.

The air district maintains several pages with more specific, up-to-date information, including:

- The Real-time Air Advisory Network, www.valleyair.org/RAAN
- Wildfire monitoring, www.valleyair.org/wildfires

Here's how wildfires up north are affecting people in Merced County

By Monica Velez

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017

A health caution was issued Valley-wide on Tuesday by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District as smoke from the wildfires blazing around California drifted into Merced and surrounding areas.

"The health caution will remain in place and smoke impacts will continue until the fires are extinguished," officials said in a statement.

The Lion Fire in Tulare County, which was caused by lightning, consumed more than 12, 850 acres. The estimated containment date is on Nov. 27.

The Tubbs Fire in Napa County burned 27,000 acres as of Tuesday afternoon, according to the CalFire website. Also in Napa County, the Atlas Fire spread to 25,000 acres and the Patrick Fire burned up 1,000 acres. All three fires were burning out of control Tuesday, as were at least two other fires in Sonoma County.

Smoke from fires can cause lung disease, asthma attacks and increase the risks of heart attacks and strokes, Valley Air officials said. Young children, seniors and people with respiratory problems are "especially susceptible" to the health effects of pollutants from smoke.

"If you can smell smoke or see ash that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as 'unhealthy' and remain indoors," according to officials.

People can go to www.valleyair.org/RAAN to check local air quality conditions.

As of Tuesday morning 15 people had been killed in the fires and officials said that number was likely to rise. More than 1,000 homes have been destroyed in the Northern part of the state.

Governor signs Assemblyman Salas' bill to reduce air pollution

Eyewitness News, Wednesday, October 11, 2017

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KBAK/KBFX) — Gov. Jerry Brown signed Assemblyman Rudy Salas' bill to reduce air pollution.

AB 188 requires the California Air Resources Board to make older pickup trucks eligible for replacement under the state vehicle retirement and replacement program.

Salas, a Democrat from Bakersfield, authored of the bill.

"I want to thank the governor for signing this bill, which developed from local Tune-in Tune-up events where we saw a clear demand to trade in older trucks for lower-emission vehicles," Salas said via a press release. "This is going to help drivers replace high-polluting trucks with cleaner vehicles to improve air quality and reduce emissions. It makes sense for our environment and will benefit hardworking families."

The bill requires the CARB to update the guidelines no later than July 1, 2019.

Salas said he hopes this bill will help get valley residents out of their older trucks and into newer trucks that are better for the environment.