

Crews Fire in Santa Clara County causes 'unhealthy' air quality across state

By Sheyanne N Romero

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Smoke from the Crews Fire in Santa Clara County is currently impacting the central and southern portions of the San Joaquin Valley.

The blaze ignited around 11:30 a.m. Sunday in the area of Canada Road and Highway 152. The fire ripped through more than 5,400 acres and caused authorities to issue evacuation notices to nearby residents.

One structure was damaged and 30 structures are in danger of being scorched. As of Tuesday, the fire was 20% contained. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

"Firefighters worked through the evening strengthening control lines and mopping up," Cal Fire officials stated. "The fire had little forward progress last night however, gusty winds this afternoon will create the potential for significant runs. Firefighters will remain vigilant throughout the day to maintain control lines and control spotting."

Across the state, Cal Fire crews are battling 4,112 wildfires.

Smoke from several other wildfires across the state have the potential to affect air quality over the next few days.

On Monday, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health caution, which will remain in place until the fires are extinguished.

Valley skies remain hazy.

Local air pollution officials caution Valley residents to reduce exposure to the particulate matter (PM) emissions by staying inside.

Smoke from the Crews Fire is currently impacting Madera, Fresno and Kings counties. However, air pollution officials predict that the fire could impact the entire Valley including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Tulare and Kern counties.

"PM pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke," stated district spokeswoman Cassandra Melching, in a Monday press release. "Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure."

Anyone who suffers from existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially vulnerable to the health effects of smoke pollution.

Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should head indoors, to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley location by visiting myRAAN.com. If residents smell smoke or see falling ash, they should consider air quality "unhealthy," district officials said.

Valley Air District issues 'health caution' for smoke looming from Northern California wildfire

Some ABC30 insiders reported smelling smoke in Hanford and Lemoore on Monday.

ABC30, Monday, July 6, 2020

FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a "health caution" as smoke from a burning wildfire in Northern California has begun to loom over Central California.

The Crews Fire sparked on July 5 and is burning in Santa Clara County near Gilroy. Air district officials say the smoke is affecting areas in the central and southern areas of the Valley, including Fresno, Madera and Kings counties.

Some ABC30 insiders reported smelling smoke in Hanford and Lemoore on Monday morning.

ABC30 Meteorologist Madeline Evans also reported lower visibility in areas of the South Valley.

The Valley Air District said that there are other wildfires burning around parts of Central California, which could also bring more smoke throughout the week.

Officials urge people to reduce the amount of time they spend outside to avoid the poor air quality, especially those with asthma or other respiratory health issues.

**Officials explain how fireworks affected the Valley's air quality this weekend
Fireworks emit a variety of particulate matter, including ash and metals, which can cause serious health effects.**

ABC30, Monday, July 6, 2020

FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- The fireworks from the Fourth of July holiday had a significant impact on the Central Valley's air quality.

"It was a pretty typical Fourth of July. We saw PM spikes in the very unhealthy level, which is about three to four times the acceptable federal limit, and it lasted about two hours," said Heather Heinks with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The agency's graph showed the spike, with levels peaking at 10 p.m. on Saturday night.

Officials said poor air quality is typical on Independence Day, and the spikes from this year were similar to those recorded last year.

Fireworks emit a variety of particulate matter, including ash and metals, which can cause serious health effects.

The medical director of the Chronic Lung Disease Program at UCSF Fresno, Dr. Anil Ghimire, said people with asthma and other respiratory issues are most at risk.

It's not clear how polluted air may affect COVID-19 patients or if it has any impact on transmitting the virus.

"Irrespective of COVID, I think people need to take precautions based on their chronic condition and the level of the pollution. So far, we don't know whether the increased pollution will increase the risk of COVID or not. We don't know that yet," Dr. Ghimire said.

Dr. Ghimire said while he recommends masks to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, most do not provide much protection against particulate matter found in fireworks.