

Wind whips up dust and sparks a health alert. Valley air officials ID areas most at risk

By Anthony Galaviz

Fresno Bee, Saturday, May 1, 2021

Blowing dust prompted central San Joaquin Valley air-quality officials to issue a “health caution” beginning Saturday night and continuing into Monday.

The alert was for “the San Joaquin Valley, with a special emphasis on the northern counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced,” the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District announced in a news release.

Strong northwesterly winds sent dust into the air throughout the Valley, prompting the district to warn against the possible health impacts. The district recommends that residents in affected areas use caution and avoid exposure.

“The gusty winds often cause localized blowing dust in areas where soils are exceptionally dry — creating unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller (PM10),” according to the release.

“Exposure to particulate pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections.”

Jim Dudley of the National Weather Service in Hanford said winds were mostly in the 30-mph range Saturday. Fresno and Kings counties topped out in that range, while Madera hit 26 mph. At San Luis Reservoir in Merced County, the gusts hit 33 mph.

The district advises people with heart or lung disease to follow doctors’ advice on dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

MORE WEATHER ISSUES, INCLUDING FRESNO HEAT ON WAY

Fresno and much of Central California, meanwhile, should brace for abnormally warm weather Wednesday. The high in Fresno Wednesday afternoon will be about 15 degrees above normal, according to the Weather Service.

A wind advisory for Kern County mountain and desert areas also was in effect through midnight Sunday, according to the Weather Service. Travelers were set to face difficult conditions, particularly those in high-profile vehicles.

Air district issues health caution due to gusty winds

The Bakersfield Californian

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, May 1, 2021

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health caution Saturday night that lasts through Monday due to blowing dust from strong northwesterly winds.

The caution is for San Joaquin Valley, and particularly the northern counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced. The air district urges people to avoid exposure to blowing dust.

The air district said in a news release that gusty winds can cause localized blowing dust where soil is dry, which leads to unhealthy concentrations of PM10.