

Valley Air District asks residents to avoid wood-burning completely this Winter

Far fewer, if any, "burn days" expected this season

By Elaina Rusk

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — Monday is November 1, and the beginning of the winter "Check Before You Burn" program.

As residents want to have a wood-burning fire in their fireplaces, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District warns that leads to high levels of particulate matter in our atmosphere. So every day from the beginning of November to the end of February, the air district releases a "residential wood-burning status", advising residents whether there are "no restrictions, but wood-burning is discouraged", or if there's "no wood-burning unless registered", or if "burning is prohibited for all".

There are fines for those who don't follow the guidelines for the day, but the air district says it is more about educating the public on the importance of keeping our air clean here in the valley.

And in fact, they say this year, they are asking the public to **avoid wood-burning completely** all season.

"We're here to let you know that there are actually a lot of health impacts associated with having that fire in your fireplace," said district representative Heather Heinks, "And there's a lot of ways to stay warm without contributing pollution to the atmosphere in our valley. Very important to let you know that we are putting money behind that statement! We can get you \$3000 to convert your open-hearth fireplace and put in a natural gas insert or stove so that it's fueled by natural gas and you're not having a combustion fire, which produces tiny little particles that float up into the atmosphere and the regular public breathes it in."

For more on how to get that voucher, [click here](#).

And check the daily residential burning status [here](#).

What's with the bad air quality in Fresno and the Central Valley?

By Justin Walker

CBS 47, Friday, Oct. 29, 2021

FRESNO, Calif. (KSEE/KGPE) — People across the Central Valley noted the distinct smell of smoke and poor air quality Friday.

Why has the air quality worsened? A representative from the Valley Air District says it may have less to do with burning wildfires and more to do with fireplaces.

"A couple of things happen this time of year," said Heather Heinks, Outreach and Communications Manager for the Valley Air District. "We see overnight temperatures dip, which means people are burning in their fireplace and you wake up and you might smell that."

Heinks says the temperatures might also cause air stagnation, which could trap pollution and bad air from wildfires that have been burning for months in and around the Central Valley.

"That's what we deal with," Heinks explains. "We turn into these cooler months and the air gets stagnant and pretty much any pollution we create gets trapped in the valley."

Indoors remains the best place to be when air quality deteriorates, according to Heinks. Experts say particulate matter pollution like the kind the Valley is experiencing today can aggravate bronchitis, COPD, and trigger asthma attacks.

"If you're smelling it, you should retreat indoors," says Heinks.

Experts are asking for Central Californians even though it's getting cooler, to avoid lighting up those fireplaces.

“We’ll give you a lot of cash to switch to natural gas and just avoid contributing pollution to our atmosphere,” Heinks says.

More information on that program is available **on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District website.**