

## **Those clouds aren't expected to bring Fresno rain. Here's what's up with the weather**

By Carmen Kohlruss

Fresno Bee, Sunday, Oct. 31, 2021

Partly cloudy conditions in Fresno on Sunday aren't foreshadowing more rain in the foreseeable future.

Precipitation is expected in Northern California on Monday, but not in Fresno, said meteorologist Jim Dudley with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

There will be only a slightly higher chance of rain early this week in the Merced area, Dudley said.

On Thursday, another weather system will take a similar path, but with the rain/no rain line likely moving a little farther south, he said, almost to Hanford and Visalia.

These are not big storm systems and will just be passing by, he added. It won't be like the atmospheric river a week prior that drenched California, which remains in a drought.

The chances of a tenth of an inch of precipitation in the Valley this week: 13% chance Tuesday, and 18% chance Thursday, in Fresno. In Merced, it's a bit higher: 22% chance Tuesday, and 25% chance Thursday, Dudley said.

Thursday's storm will be a little stronger, but not by much. Either way, don't expect much rain, Dudley said, adding that it's not uncommon to get stretches of dry weather in the Valley in November. The coming weekend is forecast to be dry in Fresno.

Otherwise, he noted, always be on the lookout for the chance of some patchy dense fog at night.

Air quality in the Fresno area returned to healthy levels on Sunday, following polluted air on Friday and Saturday.

## **Time to check before you burn (unless it's a natural gas fireplace)**

By John Cox

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Oct 30, 2021

Every year the day after Halloween, when cooler weather finally settles in around Kern County, a routine kicks in that's there for the common good. And no one who enjoys a warm hearth much likes it.

It's time to start checking whether it's OK to use a residential fireplace or wood or pellet stove.

Burning wood for residential heat is one of the biggest sources of winter pollution. That's partly because cold air settling underneath relative warmth creates a pressure differential that condenses fine particulates near human breathing level.

Last year, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District prohibited all forms of wood heating in Kern County, with few exceptions, 44 times between the start of November and the end of February. That's more than four times the rate of the year before.

Conditions point to continuing restrictions this year on residential burning.

Particulates from summer's wildfires linger in stagnant air. Not enough storms are washing away a form of pollution blamed for a variety of respiratory and cardiac problems.

Think twice before attempting it on a no-burn day. The district sends out inspectors, and it has high-tech cameras that can photograph smoke rising from a chimney.

The first fine is \$100; there's a half-off discount if the violator attends "smoke school," like traffic school but about the health impacts of dirty air. Repeat offenders have had to pay penalties in the thousands of dollars. Last year the district penalized 58 households for violations.

More than that, it's a matter of protecting everyone's health. Even on days when it's permitted to use a fireplace, the district asks that people don't. Trash burning is banned regardless.

"Choosing not to use your wood burning fireplace or fire pit this winter is critical in our pollution reduction efforts and key to public health," the district's executive director, Air Pollution Control Officer Samir Sheikh, said in a news release Friday.

No-burn days apply differently based on geography and heating devices.

Frazier Park and areas with no access to natural gas are generally exempt. People with certain wood or pellet stoves can apply to get certifications allowing them to burn on some days fireplace owners can't, but on particularly poor air-quality days all burning is forbidden irrespective of the device.

The air district recommends a cleaner alternative: natural gas inserts. It offers rebates of up to \$3,000 for residents who want to get one, and for people who qualify as low-income the district will pay the entire cost. It also subsidizes electric heat pumps, which tend to be more expensive.

A spokeswoman for the district, Jaime Holt, switched to a natural gas insert heater years ago. She reports loving it.

For only a few hundred dollars out of pocket (they can range much higher, depending in part on what sort of gas lines the house has installed), she said, "it's a great way to heat your home."

"You can use those whenever you want because they're less polluting," Holt said.

The manager at Econo Air, 314 Union Ave., sells natural gas inserts and works with the air district to equip people with them. He has a lot to say about how efficient they are — comparable to wood stoves but cheaper, more convenient, adjustable and backed up with batteries in case the power goes out.

Manager Greg Flanagan said the devices typically heat 800 square feet, easily enough to warm anyone in the living room, where the device is usually located about 8 to 15 feet from the couch.

Wood costs more than gas and has to be purchased in advance and stored, Flanagan noted. Inserts are far more efficient than fireplaces, which he said suck in colder air even as they heat. They're on a level of efficiency similar to wood stoves, he said.

The air district used to offer rebates of no more than \$1,500, he said. Now that the subsidy has increased, he said, more people are buying them, especially when the no-burn restrictions set in this time of year.

"It's a no-brainer," he said. "They're giving you \$3,000. They're paying more than you are in a lot of cases. ... We sell a lot of them."

## **Stagnant Conditions, Colder Weather Mean Deteriorating Air Quality**

Oakdale Leader, Saturday, Oct. 30, 2021

Current poor dispersion conditions and a stable atmosphere across the Valley has led to an increase in PM2.5 (particulate matter 2.5 microns and smaller) concentrations across the region, which is more common during the cooler weather of the fall and winter seasons. Lingering smoke from wildfires in the region and residential wood burning activity in the cooler weather are also contributing to the current elevated air quality conditions. Valley residents are encouraged to take actions to reduce emissions where possible, and to closely follow local air quality readings at [myRAAN.com](http://myRAAN.com) or [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).

Monday, Nov. 1 marks the beginning of the Valley Air District's residential wood burning reduction program, reminding Valley residents that their cooperation is essential in protecting public health and improving wintertime air quality.

The District urges all Valley residents to help reduce harmful PM2.5 emissions and heat their homes by means other than burning wood whenever possible. Residential wood burning is one of the Valley's largest sources of wintertime PM 2.5 emissions and is shown to have a direct effect on neighborhood air quality. In addition, nitrogen oxide (NOx) from tailpipes can add to the wintertime pollution problem.

"Less frequent winter storms and an increase in wildfires in recent years has led to significant challenges in reducing particulate matter pollution in the San Joaquin Valley," said District Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer, Samir Sheikh. "Choosing not to use your wood burning fireplace or fire pit this winter is critical in our pollution reduction efforts and key to public health."

The winter season residential wood burning reduction program runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February every year, reducing PM 2.5 emissions from wood burning devices such as fireplaces, wood stoves, outdoor fire pits and chimeneas. During that time, the District releases a daily, county-by-county wood burning declaration based on the air quality forecast. Burning trash or yard refuse is always prohibited.

Daily burn information is available by visiting [www.valleyair.org/burnstatus](http://www.valleyair.org/burnstatus), by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by downloading the free "Valley Air" app on your mobile device. There are three declaration levels: No Burning For All; No Burning Unless Registered; Burning Discouraged.

Mandatory curtailments do not apply to natural gas devices. Residences in areas with no natural gas service or where wood burning is the sole source of heat are exempt. Rural, mountain and foothill areas where propane tanks are used are considered to be without natural gas service. Outdoor wood burning devices at all residences are still subject to daily restrictions, regardless of exemption status.

Valley residents are encouraged to participate in the Burn Cleaner incentive program and receive as much as \$3,000 to upgrade from older, higher-polluting wood stoves and open-hearth fireplaces to natural gas devices. To participate in this program, visit [www.valleyair.org/burncleaner](http://www.valleyair.org/burncleaner).

Residents with EPA Certified wood and pellet-fueled devices may register them with the Valley Air District in order to use them when the declaration is "No Burning Unless Registered". Find out how to register by visiting: [www.valleyair.org/CBYBregistration](http://www.valleyair.org/CBYBregistration).

## **Fresno's air quality is still nasty. This is what the air district asks residents to do**

By Thaddeus Miller

Fresno Bee, Saturday, Oct. 30, 2021

Fresno-area officials are asking San Joaquin Valley residents to tamp their output of daily pollution to help improve air quality.

The particulate matter in the air climbed Friday and reached the red level — the fourth-highest ranking out of five — overnight in parts of the Valley, according to real-time readings from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Community-based sensors from Purple Air showed air pollution Saturday that the company said could have effects on people exposed for an extended time, especially those who have other respiratory conditions. Those readings tended to be worse the farther south the sensors were in Fresno.

Residents can help improve air quality by refraining from burning and reducing their trips in gas-powered cars, according to Samir Sheikh, the district executive director and air pollution control officer.

"We're now moving from what has been another bad wildfire season where we all unfortunately had to experience very concentrated wildfire smoke for extended durations," he said. "We are entering into the winter season that is historically the high ... particulate matter season for the San Joaquin Valley."

Sheikh said wood burning should be left to only those who have no other source of heat during the coldest months.

Early in October, the wildfires burning in the state made Valley air smoky and too dangerous for extended exposure, according to the district.

Fresno and the Valley saw some wet weather last week and then a significant storm Monday, which were helpful for cleaning the air and moving pollution out of the area, according to meteorologist Jim Blagnall with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

Since then a high pressure system has left the air stagnant, which creates conditions that put a sort of lid on the Valley and traps bad air, he said. Day-to-day pollution, dust and other matter continues to be pushed into the air.

The kind of weather that could help will likely miss Fresno to the north on Monday, but another low pressure system seems to be on the way about Thursday or Friday, he said.

Real-time air quality by ZIP code is also available at [myRAAN.com](http://myRAAN.com).

Valley residents can participate in the Burn Cleaner incentive program and receive as much as \$3,000 to upgrade older, higher-polluting wood stoves and open-hearth fireplaces to natural gas devices. To participate in that program visit [valleyair.org/burncleaner](http://valleyair.org/burncleaner).

## **Valley residents asked not to burn and to drive less**

By Lara Collins

Fox26News, Saturday, Oct. 30, 2021

Smoke from wildfires and people burning wood are said to be contributing to the deteriorating air quality.

Particulate matter concentrations have increased across the region, and Valley residents are being encouraged to reduce emissions wherever possible.

On November 1 the Valley Air District's residential wood burning reduction program will take effect.

The program is to remind people that reducing emissions is needed to protect public health and improve air quality.

Residents are being asked to heat their homes by means other than wood burning when possible.

District Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer, Samir Sheikh,

"Less frequent winter storms and an increase in wildfires in recent years has led to significant challenges in reducing particulate matter pollution in the San Joaquin Valley. Choosing not to use your wood burning fireplace or fire pit this winter is critical in our pollution reduction efforts and key to public health."

Those that have no other way of keeping warm other than wood burning are exempt.

Outdoor wood burning devices at all residences are still subject to daily restrictions, regardless of exemption status.

Nitrogen oxide from tailpipes can also add to air pollution, and residents are being asked to drive less if possible.

The winter residential wood burning reduction program runs from November 1 through the end of February every year.

Valley residents are being encouraged to participate in the Burn Cleaner incentive program and receive as much as \$3,000 to upgrade from older, higher-polluting wood stoves and open-hearth fireplaces to natural gas devices. To participate in this program, visit [here](#).

Residents with EPA Certified wood and pellet-fueled devices may register them with the Valley Air District in order to use them when the declaration is "No Burning Unless Registered". Find out how to register by visiting [here](#).

Daily burn information is available [here](#), or by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by downloading the free "Valley Air" app on your mobile device.

In addition, residents are invited to sign up for daily email wood-burning notifications by clicking [here](#).

## **Unhealthy Air Hangs Over Fresno on Eve of 'Check Before You Burn'**

By Liz Juarez, Friday, Oct. 29, 2021

The San Joaquin Air Pollution District is advising people to stay inside as much as possible this Halloween weekend because weather conditions have trapped fine particulates in the air.

Even after the big rainstorm earlier this week, lingering wildfire smoke continues to add to the Valley's air pollution, district officials said.

The good news is, residents wanting to protect their health, as well as community health, can take advantage of grant programs.

### **What's Causing the Bad Air Quality?**

The rain that made its way into the Valley on Monday provided only a few hours of relief from the wildfire smoke and other minuscule particles.

"We have some really bad meteorological conditions that ... put a lid over the Valley," said Samir Sheikh, the air district's executive director, during a county public health Zoom meeting on Friday.

"We have specific weather conditions that really lead the formation of this PM2.5, which is a very impactful pollutant. It's very unhealthy for residents to breathe."

Low wind speeds combined with the wildfire smoke and emissions from vehicles and manufacturing are producing unsafe air quality, Sheikh said.

### **Valley Officials Say No Wood Burning This Winter**

Beginning on Monday, Nov. 1, and continuing until the end of February, the district's wood-burning reduction program will be in effect.

"Choosing not to use your wood-burning fireplace or fire pit this winter is critical in our pollution reduction efforts and key to public health," said Sheikh.

Under "Check Before You Burn," the air district issues a daily wood-burning advisory.

Depending on weather and air-quality conditions, the advisory could be "no restrictions, but wood-burning is discouraged" in stoves and fireplaces. Or, it could ban burning entirely.

Any burning of trash and yard refuse is prohibited year-round.

Fines are part of the program, but the district says it would rather educate residents about why wood burning is harmful.

### **District Offers Grant To Reduce Emissions**

District officials encourage residents to take action in combatting bad air quality by using grants that help pay for zero-emission devices.

"We also have grants available for residents, so if you happen to have a wood stove or an open-hearth fireplace, and want to convert that, we would encourage you to convert it into a natural gas insert or perhaps an electric," said Sheikh.

Valley District officials have an online portal where residents can apply for grants of up to \$3,000.