



# VALLEY AIR NEWS

## Season five of Check Before You Burn under way

The Air District's successful "Check Before You Burn" campaign began on November 1, reminding residents in all eight Valley counties of the importance of refraining from lighting a fire on days when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy.

Check Before You Burn takes place every year from November 1 through the end of February.

The rule prohibits the use of wood-burning fireplaces, inserts or pellet-fueled devices on winter days when District forecasters determine air quality will reach 151 or higher on the Air Quality Index (AQI), making it unhealthy for everyone.

The first wood-burning prohibition occurred on Saturday, November 3, when Tulare and Kings counties and the western portion of Kern County were forecast to be unhealthy.

Combustion from solid fuel, such as wood, is the largest source of particulate matter in the Valley during winter months, generating as much as 24 tons per day of particles from smoke, soot and ash.

Regulating this pollutant is vital to the District's role of protecting public health. Particulate matter measuring both 10 microns and smaller (PM10) and 2.5 microns and smaller (PM2.5) can exacerbate or cause many breathing-related illnesses, including asthma and emphysema, and also increases the risk of heart attacks.

The District credits public support of the wood-burning program as key to the Valley air basin's recent attainment of health standards for PM10.

The wood-burning status for each county is issued each day to all media outlets, recorded on the District's SMOG INFO line (1-800-766-4463) and listed on the District website, [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). The daily air-quality forecast is available for all eight Valley counties in English and Spanish. The forecast is also in Hmong by calling the District's Hmong Information line at 1-877-344-1212.

To determine if you reside within the

jurisdiction of the Valley Air District, see the California Air Resources Board website, [www.arb.ca.gov/app/dislookup/dislookup.php](http://www.arb.ca.gov/app/dislookup/dislookup.php), or contact the Air District for more information.

There are three stages associated with the wood-burning program:

- When air quality is good or moderate (0-100 on the AQI), wood burning is permitted.
- When air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150 on the AQI), wood burning is discouraged.
- When air quality is unhealthy for the general public (151 or higher) wood burning is prohibited.

Violators of this rule are subject to a minimum \$50 fine while repeat offenders face higher fees.

All wood-burning fireplaces, inserts and pellet-fueled heating units are subject to the rule.

However, there are exceptions. Homes and businesses in areas where natural gas service is unavailable and areas above 3,000 feet in elevation are exempt from these restrictions. Also exempt are homes in which burning wood is the only source of heat.

The rule also does not apply to natural gas stoves and inserts or cooking stoves that burn wood.

Burning trash in your fireplace or wood stove, a burn barrel or in an open pile is always prohibited.

Last season, the following prohibitions were declared in each county from Nov. 1 through the end of February.

San Joaquin	1
Stanislaus	9
Merced	2
Madera	2
Fresno	12
Kern (Valley air basin)	8
Kings	2
Tulare	3

## Governing Board will grow in '08

In January 2008, the Air District's Governing Board will add four new members to its ranks. The change comes from passage of Senate Bill 719, signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger in October.

The Governing Board will add two representatives from large cities in the Valley and two medical professionals to the current composition of eight county supervisors and a city council member from each of the District's three regions.

The governor will appoint a physician who specializes in the health effects of air pollution and an environmental scientist with specific expertise in air pollution.

The additional city representatives will be council members from cities in the Valley of at least 100,000 people.

Currently, city council members with seats on the board represent one small city, one medium-sized city and one large city.

The additional council members could give representation to the Valley's most populous cities in each region, such as Fresno, Stockton, Bakersfield, Modesto and Visalia.

The District's northern region is made up of the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced. Fresno, Madera and Kings counties are in the central region. Tulare and Kern counties make up the District's southern region.