

VALLEY AIR NEWS

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Summer wildfires impact air quality and public health

Smoke from wild fires burning in the counties of Monterey and Los Angeles kicked off the summer wildfire season for the San Joaquin Valley, affecting air quality Valley-wide. Unusually high particulate and ozone levels throughout the Valley prompted Air District officials to issue the season's first health cautionary statement addressing wildfire pollution on July 27.

Wildfires produce particulate matter (PM) and contribute to the creation of ground-level ozone, which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increases in the risk of heart attacks and stroke. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and the elderly are especially susceptible to the negative health effects of these pollutants. The Air District urges residents to follow their doctors' orders and minimize exposure to wildfire emissions by staying indoors if possible.

The Soberanes, Goose and Mineral fires have generated large amounts of pollution which have combined with high heat and a strong high pressure system over the Valley causing smoke and ozone to remain trapped within the air basin, worsening the Valley's already-challenging summer smog.

"Businesses and residents of the Valley have done so much to reduce summertime pollution that it is unfortunate when these wildfires overwhelm that great work," stated Seyed Sadredin, the District's Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer. "However, the public needs to be advised that while these fires burn and bring smoke into the Valley, they need to take the appropriate steps to protect their health."

The District warns residents that these poor air quality conditions may continue throughout the month of August based on the projected weather conditions and the potential for prolonged wildfire activity.

Residents are also advised that the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM 2.5, which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing impacts from these wildfires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash, that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" and remain indoors.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

Register your stove before wood burning season begins

It may seem odd to discuss wood burning during the heat of summer, but, just as residents who heat their homes using wood know to prepare in advance for the winter by stocking up on wood or pellets, it's just as important to prepare by registering your clean-burning wood/pellet



stove/insert before the season begins.

The District's Check Before You Burn program reduces wintertime PM (particulate matter) by curtailing the use of fireplaces and older wood stoves when air quality begins to deteriorate by declaring "No Burning Unless Registered". This declaration allows residents with cleaner devices, such as EPA Certified wood/pellet stoves and inserts, to burn but only if their devices have been inspected and registered by an RWBHP (Registered Wood Burning Heater Professional).

When air quality is expected to exceed public health standards for PM, the District declares "No Burning for all." On such days, no wood burning devices are permitted to be used in the county where "No Wood Burning for all" has been declared.

Based on past seasons, there are very few days that registered devices are not allowed to burn. Residents who invest in cleaner devices and follow the registration procedure have the allowance to burn on most winter days, yet wintertime air pollution is still dramatically reduced.

Because RWBHPs can get extremely busy and may have a long waiting list of customers, it's important to schedule this service well in advance of planned use. The District requires that residents who plan to use their devices on "No Burning Unless Registered" days, have their devices registered every three years.

This rule applies only to residents of the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin who live in areas where natural gas service is available and wood burning is not their sole source of heat.

To register your device, visit: www.valleyair.org/CBYBregistration/.



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