

**SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY UNIFIED
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT
MEDIA RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
1/17/2003

Contact: Charlie Goldberg
Public Education
Phone: (559) 230-5800
After-hours pager: (559) 446-7580

**Valley Air District monitors record peak particulate levels;
Changes in wind patterns are spreading fire smoke to new parts of Fresno/Clovis;
Cautionary statement issued for fourth day**

Fresno, CA –The Valley Air District recorded peaks in fine airborne particles at its Fresno monitoring sites this afternoon. Additionally, shifting wind patterns could bring smoke from the fire that continues to burn in southwest Fresno to new areas of the Fresno/Clovis metropolitan area. These conditions have led Air Pollution Control Officer David L. Crow to extend the cautionary advisory for the Fresno/Clovis metropolitan area to the fourth consecutive day, at least through 3 p.m., Friday, January 17.

“Data from our monitoring sites indicates variable wind patterns leading to new areas being impacted by fire smoke,” said Air District Meteorologist Evan Shipp. “Prevailing winds were leading fire smoke away from our monitors the last several days and we were registering only moderate levels of particulate matter (PM). However, the unhealthy peaks in fine particles we’ve recorded this afternoon indicate that the smoke could be carried to broad areas of the Fresno metropolitan area,” Shipp said.

“Additionally, we are seeing increased stability aloft. This is limiting dispersion at ground level,” Shipp said. “Unfortunately, the particles that have built up this week likely will not be dispersed over the short term.”

The Valley Air District is forecasting 170 on the air quality index (AQI) for the Fresno/Clovis area. At this level the air is considered unhealthy for all groups. However, some areas could experience

(more)

conditions equivalent to 200 or more on the AQI. These levels are considered very unhealthy for everyone.

“We know there are localized pockets where smoke is creating unhealthy breathing conditions. We continue to urge residents to be aware of conditions in their area. If you can smell smoke, you most likely are in an area where air quality is poor.” People with respiratory or heart conditions, the elderly and children should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion. Additionally, all others should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

Residents in the Fresno/Clovis areas should adhere to the following protective measures during the duration of the advisory.

- If possible, try to remain indoors until the episode has passed.
- Recirculate indoor air.
- Do not smoke, and avoid places where others are smoking.

Additionally, schools in Fresno and Clovis have been advised to check local conditions and discontinue sustained rigorous outdoor exercise, practice or games if smoke is seen or can be smelled, or if children are experiencing breathing difficulties.

PM is a mixture of pollutants, including microscopic pieces of soot, ash, salts, nitrates and smoke particles. Breathing the particles can reduce lung function, especially in children; aggravate heart and lung conditions such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis; increase the risk of heart attacks; irritate throats and sinuses; and trigger headaches and allergies.

Please notify your audience of the prevailing air quality conditions and possible health effects. For the daily air quality forecast, residents may call 1-800-SMOG-INFO (766-4463). The information is updated daily at 4 p.m. for that evening and the following day.