

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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Air District officials ask Valley residents to avoid wood burning until Friday

Unhealthy levels of airborne particles caused Air Pollution Control Officer David L. Crow to strongly urge Valley residents to refrain from using wood-burning fireplaces and stoves until Friday morning. This is the second such request this season in the Air District's annual "Please Don't Light Tonight" campaign.

The request for residents to voluntarily curtail wood burning affects residents throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Please Don't Light Tonight requests usually are issued for a 24-hour period. However, persistent weather patterns led the District to issue this request for the coming three nights.

"A strong high pressure ridge over the eastern Pacific will build over the region during the next 24 hours, leading to poor atmospheric dispersion conditions through Friday," said Valley Air District Pollution Meteorologist Shawn Ferreria. "Coupled with light surface winds and a strong morning inversion trapping pollutants near the San Joaquin Valley floor, fine particulate matter will steadily climb through the end of the week."

Please Don't Light Tonight seeks to reduce unhealthy levels of particulate matter (PM) in the Valley. Breathing these particles is unhealthy and can aggravate or cause respiratory diseases such as asthma, emphysema and bronchitis; irritate eyes, throat and sinuses; and even at low levels, trigger headaches and allergies. Wood smoke from residential fires is a significant source of PM producing up to 30 percent of these emissions in urban areas. Wood smoke contains particles that are so tiny that they seep into homes despite closed doors and windows. Pollution levels inside a closed home can be up to 70 percent of the outdoor level.

The curtailment request does not apply to residents living above 3,000 feet, those who rely on wood-burning devices as their only source of heat, and users of pellet or EPA-certified wood burning stoves or EPA-certified fireplace inserts.

For more information on prevailing air quality conditions, residents and the media may call 1-800-SMOG-INFO or log onto www.valleyair.org.