

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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Airborne particles forecast to peak at unhealthy levels tonight --

Air District heightens request for Valley residents to not burn wood

Levels of airborne particles in the Valley are on the rise and forecasted to reach particularly unhealthy levels this evening. These worsening conditions led Air Pollution Control Officer David L. Crow to strongly urge all Valley residents to refrain from using wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.

On Monday, the Air District issued a Please Don't Light Tonight request asking Valley residents to not burn wood until Friday morning. "Weather conditions have worsened and we are strongly emphasizing that request," said Crow. "We need Valley residents to do their part to protect the health of their families and their neighbors by not lighting their wood fires tonight."

"Meteorological conditions that foster unhealthy particulate matter (PM) pollution are as bad as they have been for the past five autumns," said Air District Meteorologist Evan Shipp. District meteorologists forecast that overnight pollution levels for the smallest of these particles (2.5 microns and smaller) will reach levels above 165 on the Air Quality Index. At these levels all people with respiratory problems should avoid outdoor exertion. Even those without respiratory conditions could experience health problems.

"We continue to have a strong high pressure ridge to the east. The inversion layer is the strongest the Air District has recorded for the past ten falls. And with very light surface winds, these pollutants are being trapped at ground level," Shipp said.

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;

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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.

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. Information about prevailing air quality conditions is available by calling 1-800-Smog-Info or online at www.valleyair.org.