

News Release



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Spare the Air season ends with fraction of previous year totals

Sept. 26 – Reduced emissions contributed to a remarkably low number of Spare the Air days declared in the San Joaquin Valley this summer.

Just six Spare the Air days were called District-wide during the 2007 season, ending Sunday. Typically, between 20 and 40 Spare the Air days are declared during the summer, depending on location.

The six days – June 14-15, July 5-6, August 3 and September 7 – compare to 23 days in 2006 and 18 in 2005.

"I want to give credit where it's due, which is to Valley residents and businesses, who have really stepped up to the challenge of reducing their emissions," said Seyed Sadredin, Executive Director of the Valley Air District.

Spare the Air days are called when air quality is forecast to deteriorate to levels that are unhealthy (151 and higher on the Air Quality Index) or unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150) in adjacent counties.

This year, Spare the Air declarations across the board were a fraction of previous years' tallies. In the northern region – typically seeing the lowest number of Spare the Air days in the air basin –one Spare the Air Day was declared in San Joaquin County, two in Stanislaus and just three in Merced County. In 2006, there were 10 Spare the Air days in San Joaquin County, 13 in Stanislaus and 19 in Merced County.

In the southern two counties, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern, there were six Spare the Air days in each county, compared to 23 apiece the previous year.

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2007 marks decreased Spare the Air tally

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"It appears that Valley residents have gotten the message that each of us in our daily lives can affect air-pollution levels," said Jaime Holt, the District's Chief Communications Officer. "This year's performance is really a testament to the commitment by all of us to cleaner air."

Spare the Air season runs from June through September each year, which is the height of the ozone season. Vehicle use contributes the majority of ozone-forming pollutants in the Valley. Ozone, the primary ingredient in smog, can exacerbate respiratory conditions and trigger asthma attacks. Children, the elderly and people with existing respiratory conditions are especially vulnerable, but when ozone reaches an unhealthy level, everybody is at risk.

On Spare the Air Days, residents in the affected counties should limit outdoor exertion, especially between 3 and 7 p.m., when ozone levels usually are highest. Residents are also asked to voluntarily postpone emission-causing activities that contribute to deteriorating air quality. Some of the suggested Spare the Air alternatives are:

- Sharing a ride, taking public transportation, walking or biking instead of driving;
- Linking your trips (doing all your errands at one time);
- Postponing the use of gas-powered lawn equipment;
- Using an electric briquette igniter instead of lighter fluid;
- Using water-based paints and solvents instead of oil-based products.

This year's Spare the Air days, by county, compared to previous years:

County	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Fresno	5	23	18	11	40
Kern	6	23	18	27	41
Kings	3	17	12	10	39
Madera	2	11	9	5	36
Merced	3	19	11	5	37
San Joaquin	1	10	6	3	15
Stanislaus	2	13	9	3	15
Tulare	6	23	18	15	39
District-wide	6	23	18	27	41

During Spare the Air season, forecasts and tips on how to Spare the Air are available at the District's website, www.valleyair.org; through the District's toll-free number, 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463); in most daily newspapers; and on TV and radio weather reports. The winter air-quality program, Check Before You Burn, begins Nov. 1. At that time, daily wood-burning forecasts will be available at these locations.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern.