

News Release



**Attention:
City or assignments editors**

**Please note the 3 p.m. news
conference discussed in the
media advisory below.**

Northern Region Contact —Modesto
Anthony Presto
(209) 557-6400

Central Region Contact —Fresno
Janis Parker
(559) 230-5800

Southern Region Contact —Bakersfield
Kelly Hogan Malay
(661) 326-6900

Air District board approves ‘extreme’ designation request

[December 18, 2003] The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District’s Governing Board voted today to request a downgrade in the Valley’s ozone status from “severe” to “extreme” non-attainment. The decision is a realistic step toward achieving attainment, said District officials.

“A downgrade in the ozone classification won’t alter the pace at which the Air District adopts rules to improve air quality,” said Dave Crow, the District’s Air Pollution Control Officer. “We will continue to implement controls to protect public health. But the change in status will give us a realistic deadline for attainment, which the severe designation does not do.”

The District’s Governing Board, which is comprised of eleven locally elected officials from throughout the San Joaquin Valley, voted unanimously to request the status downgrade. The action will be reviewed by the California Air Resources Board and forwarded to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.

The Valley air basin is currently classified “severe non-attainment” for ozone, the primary ingredient of smog. In order to meet the 2005 “severe” deadline, the District would need to reduce valley-wide ozone precursor emissions by about one-third. Autos and trucks – which are responsible for nearly 60 percent of the Valley’s smog problem – are under the direct control of the state and federal governments.

- more -

Continuing under the severe designation would mean the Valley would trigger automatic sanctions of additional offset requirements, the possible loss of \$2.2 billion in federal highway funds and the implementation of a federally directed clean-up plan.

In voting to approve the downgrade request, several board members cited locally controlled air clean-up plans as the most effective.

If the EPA grants the change in status, the District's new deadline for meeting attainment of the federal one-hour standard for ozone will be 2010, during which time crucial new state and federal regulations governing mobile sources will go into effect, enabling the District to meet its goals.

This is the first time nationwide an air district has voluntarily sought a downgrade to extreme non-attainment status. The South Coast air basin, which includes the Los Angeles area, is the only region in the country currently designated extreme non-attainment.

MEDIA ADVISORY

The Air District will hold a news conference at 3 p.m. today to discuss “extreme” non-attainment, today’s Governing Board action and air quality in the Valley. The news conference will be conducted by video-conference among the District’s three regional offices: in Fresno at 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave., in Modesto at 4230 Kiernan Ave. Suite 130 and in Bakersfield at 2700 M St. Suite 275. The conference will originate in the Fresno office and District staff will be available in all three offices for comment.