

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

TO:

Local News sections

Weather sections

North District Media Contact - Modesto

Anthony Presto

(209) 557-6400

Central District Media Contact - Fresno

Kelly Hogan Morphy

(559) 230-6000

South District Media Contact - Bakersfield

Brenda Turner

(661) 326-6900

Weekend and After-Hours Media Contact

Jaime Holt, Public Information Administrator

Cell: (559) 284-6317

First-of-season fireplace ban issued in Fresno and Kern counties Wood burning also discouraged in three other Valley counties

(Fresno, CA) – The season's first fireplace and woodstove ban has been issued for Fresno and the Valley portion of Kern counties due to expected poor air quality. The daylong mandatory curtailment will be in effect from midnight Friday through at least midnight Saturday.

The curtailment applies to burning wood, pellets and manufactured firelogs and is the first ban of this season. The Check Before You Burn program, which runs Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, aims to reduce fall and wintertime air pollution in the San Joaquin Valley. Mandatory curtailments are issued on a countywide basis when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for the general public, or an Air Quality Index that exceeds 150. Violations can result in fines.

A high-pressure system is causing stagnant air and poor dispersion, which can lead to particulates building up, making air quality poor. The air-quality forecast for Saturday is 152 in both Fresno and Kern.

"If residents comply with the ban and refrain from burning, we could see an AQI closer to the high 130s or low 140s in these counties, instead of air quality that's unhealthy for the general population," said Shawn Ferreria, a meteorologist for the Valley Air District.

A voluntary curtailment also has been issued for Tulare, Madera and Kings counties, meaning that residents are asked to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning devices unless they are stoves and inserts that meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 1990 standards; are pellet-fueled or burn manufactured firelogs.

Last season, 11 mandatory curtailments were issued for Fresno and 16 for the Valley portion of Kern.

Sunday's wood-burning status will be available by 4 p.m. Saturday. It is provided in English and Spanish toll-free at 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) and at www.valleyair.org. Updates in Hmong are available toll-free at 1-877-344-1212. The status also is provided as a public service by many news outlets.

Mandatory curtailments do not apply to: devices that use natural gas or propane exclusively; homes that don't have connections to natural-gas service; homes in areas 3,000 feet or higher in elevation; homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat; and cooking devices.

When wood burning is allowed, it should be done as cleanly as possible. Also, it is illegal to burn garbage or treated wood either in a fireplace or outdoors at any time. Additionally, the wood-burning curtailment program should not be confused with other Air District programs that regulate hazard-reduction burning, prescribed burning and agricultural burning.

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The Valley Air District serves eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For assistance, contact the nearest District office in Modesto at (209) 557-6440, Fresno (559) 230-6000 or Bakersfield (661) 326-6900, or visit www.valleyair.org.