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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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District asks public to be mindful of air quality during Back-to-School ***Pollution from an increase in traffic could hamper record clean summer***

The San Joaquin Valley is on the verge of completing a record-setting clean air summer season for ozone. This is unprecedented given the severe drought, strings of triple-digit temperatures and multiple wildfires impacting the Valley. As we approach the end of summer and the beginning of the school season, maintaining this clean air pace requires diligence by the public in minimizing vehicle emissions associated with back-to-school traffic.

Although May through July 2015 had times of good atmospheric dispersion from passing storms, it also had a number of high pressure stagnation events with soaring triple-digit temperatures, plentiful sunshine and stagnant wind flow that all contributed to the potential formation of high concentrations of ozone.

Despite these challenges, Valley air quality has shown tremendous improvement this ozone season compared to past years, and has continually set new records over the past 35 years. These improvements would not be possible without the success of the District's control strategy through its various attainment planning efforts, its robust incentive programs, and the commitment from Valley stakeholders doing their part to reduce emissions as much as possible.

Specifically, for the May-to-July period of 2015, the Valley has:

- Set a new record low for the number of days exceeding the 2008 8-hour ozone standard of 75 ppb, with only 36 days recorded.
- Set a new record low for the number of days exceeding the 1997 8-hour ozone standard of 84 ppb, with only 15 days recorded.

“Thanks to the vigilance and cooperation of residents and businesses throughout the Valley, we’ve had a great summer with regard to keeping ozone levels down,” said Seyed Sadredin, the District’s air pollution control officer and executive director. “We urge the public to be even more mindful of their contributions to poor air quality during this crucial Back-to-School window.”

To ensure that this clean air trend continues during the Back-to-School season, the Valley Air District may call Air Alerts when conditions such as increased emissions, high temperatures and stagnant air flow are favorable for ozone accumulation. During an Air Alert episode, which may last several days, residents and businesses are urged to reduce vehicle emissions by driving less, refraining from idling their vehicles, carpooling or vanpooling and avoiding the use of drive-through services. Other measures, such as shifting ozone-creating activities, including lawn maintenance to early mornings, can also help offset rising ozone levels.

To help minimize pollution associated with school site vehicle idling, the District has partnered with hundreds of Valley schools through the Healthy Air Living Schools program. The program gives schools tools and materials to encourage parents to “Turn the Key & Be Idle Free” when picking up or dropping off students at school sites. In addition, the program trains schools on how to use the Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN). Schools, parents or any Valley resident can check their current, localized air quality by subscribing to RAAN, which links a computer or smart phone app to any monitor in the District’s Valley-wide network. Hourly, automated emails are delivered when air quality is changing.

To complement the RAAN system, the District also created the innovative Web-based Archived Air Quality (WAAQ) System. This new online tool allows users to compare historical air quality data from the last two decades using information specific to their local neighborhood.

To explore these tools, visit www.valleyair.org/RAAN or www.valleyair.org/WAAQS. Residents can also check their daily air quality forecast by calling 1-800 SMOG INFO (766-4463). Plus, visit the District on Facebook or Twitter by searching “Valley Air District.”

Media info: You can use the following links to access our FTP site, where you will find charts and graphs related to this event “2015 Back-to-School Media Files”.

For users using a browser:

<ftp://vadpublicdoc:public.education@ftp.valleyair.org/Private/OC/>

For users using an FTP application:

<ftp://ftp.valleyair.org/Private/OC/>

Username: vadpublicdoc

Password: public.education

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley air basin portion of Kern. Visit www.valleyair.org to learn more.

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