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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Severe blowing dust prompts Air Quality Emergency warning for Kern County

Potentially dangerous levels of particulate matter expected to continue through Wednesday evening

High winds causing blowing dust continue to severely impact air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley, but especially in the Valley portion of Kern County, including the City of Bakersfield and surrounding communities. Local air pollution officials are cautioning Kern County residents that emergency-level particulate matter concentrations may be reached during this high-wind event, and residents are urged to avoid extended exposure by moving indoors to an air-conditioned/filtered environment with windows closed.

The District is also asking that the public take action to limit activities that can exacerbate the problem. For instance, businesses are asked to delay construction and farming activities that generate dust. The District is not allowing agricultural burning during this episode. Residents should delay outdoor lawn care maintenance activities, and avoid outdoor grilling and the use of residential wood-burning devices, and cease all unnecessary driving. Schools should keep children inside and cancel outdoor and sports activities.

While blowing dust is expected to subside late Wednesday evening, residual dust may continue to contribute to poor air quality through the end of the week. Wind-blown dust can create unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter, which can trigger asthma attacks and exacerbate other respiratory diseases.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).