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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Severe blowing dust and potential smoke from California wildfires prompts Health Caution reminder

Poor air quality prompts Valley Air District to urge public to take protective action

High winds causing blowing dust, and potential smoke from the California wildfires, continues to affect air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley, especially in Kern, Kings, Tulare and western Fresno counties. Local air pollution officials want to remind Valley residents that a health caution and an Air Quality Alert remain in place and that they should take action to limit their exposure to dust and smoke.

Blowing dust is expected to subside by Thursday, while smoke impacts are likely to continue until the fires are extinguished. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move indoors to an air-conditioned/filtered environment with windows closed. Wildfire smoke and wind-blown dust can create unhealthy concentrations of PM2.5 (particulate matter 2.5 microns and smaller) and PM10 (particulate matter 10 microns and smaller). Both pollutants can trigger asthma attacks, and exacerbate other respiratory diseases, while PM2.5 can also increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

People with heart or lung disease in impacted areas should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate matter exposure. In addition, sensitive individuals, such as those with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants.

The District has issued this health caution and Air Quality Alert due to extremely unusual conditions and encourages the public to take action to limit activities that can exacerbate the problem. For instance, residents should delay outdoor lawn care maintenance activities, reduce driving through carpooling and trip linking, avoid outdoor BBQing, and avoid using residential wood-burning devices.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality in the Valley by visiting myRAAN.com. The RAAN monitors are designed to detect the microscopic PM2.5 particles that exist in smoke. However, larger particles, such as ash and dust, may not be detected.

If an area is covered in ash or dust, air quality should be considered “unhealthy” (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if the monitor reflects a lower reading.

The public can check the District’s wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also follow air quality conditions by downloading the free “Valley Air” app, available in the Apple store or Google Play.

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).

Guidelines	
LEVEL 1	Outdoor activity OK for all
LEVEL 2	Sensitive individuals should consider reducing prolonged and/or vigorous outdoor activities.
LEVEL 3	Sensitive individuals should exercise indoors or avoid vigorous activities.
LEVEL 4	Sensitive individuals should exercise indoors. Everyone should avoid prolonged or vigorous outdoor activities.
LEVEL 5	Everyone should avoid outdoor activity.