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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Smoke and dust impact Valley

Potential elevated particulate matter poses health concern Valley-wide

Smoke from the Briceburg Fire near Yosemite National Park in Mariposa County and blowing dust from anticipated gusty winds on Wednesday, are prompting Valley Air District officials to issue a health cautionary statement for the entire San Joaquin Valley. Smoke impacts are expected to continue until the fire is extinguished, while blowing dust should subside by Thursday.

Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move indoors to an air-conditioned/filtered environment with their 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.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley address 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).