

News Release

12-21-06

For Immediate Release



TO:

Local news sections

Weather sections

Central District Media Contact - Fresno

Janelle Schneider

(559) 230-6000

North District Media Contact – Modesto

Anthony Presto

(209) 557-5400

Weekend media contact

Jaime Holt

(559) 284-6317

Consider health when lighting that Christmas fire, officials urge

Cooperation from public could help prevent poor air quality

(Fresno, CA) – Without good cooperation from residents, air quality over the holiday weekend will deteriorate in the San Joaquin Valley.

Weather conditions are expected to be more stagnant than usual over the holiday weekend, which would make it difficult for resulting pollution to disperse, said forecasters at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. In addition, when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy, residential wood burning is prohibited.

Residential wood burning can contribute up to a third of harmful particulate matter (PM) – composed of soot, ash, tiny droplets of liquid and other matter -- to skies over our communities. PM has insidious health consequences: High levels have been linked to increased incidences of heart attacks and respiratory illness.

“We realize that Christmas is typically the holiday when a cozy fire is particularly welcoming,” said Tom Jordan, the Air District’s special projects administrator. “However, when the air is stagnant, the pollution from those fires pools in neighborhoods and is especially harmful to human health. We’re asking people to take their own health, as well as their neighbors’, into consideration when they think about building a fire this weekend.”

The Air District issues its daily air-quality forecast and wood-burning status each afternoon at 4:30. It is available 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 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 by either discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood-burning heaters and fireplaces when air quality is expected to be unhealthy. When wood burning is allowed, residents are urged to burn as cleanly as possible by using gas or propane devices, wood inserts and stoves manufactured after July 1990, pellet-fueled heaters, or manufactured firelogs in an open fireplace.

Largely because of the public’s cooperation with the program, the air basin this year, for the first time ever, reached attainment of a PM10 standard.

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

Mandatory and voluntary wood-burning restrictions do not apply to natural gas or propane devices; homes in which wood burning is the sole source of heat, homes and businesses located at elevations higher than 3,000 feet; and homes and businesses where natural gas service is not available.

####

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.