

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

**Local News, Health and Weather
sections**

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High winds prompt health warning

Air District cautions that air pollution levels may climb in coming days

Expected high winds throughout the San Joaquin Valley have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement for Tuesday evening through Wednesday evening.

The high winds – forecast to be 10 to 20 miles per hour with possible gusts to 30 mph in parts of the Valley – can kick up dust from dry land and create unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter ten microns and smaller, or PM10.

“The combination of things being relatively dry -- the lack of moisture in the soil -- and the unusually high winds could lead to unhealthy air,” said Shawn Ferreria, a meteorologist for the District.

Exposure to particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents throughout the San Joaquin Valley are advised to use caution Tuesday evening through Wednesday evening. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

The air-quality forecast for Wednesday is as follows:

Fresno County, 76 (moderate);
Kern (valley portion only), 96 (moderate);
Kings, 102 (unhealthy for sensitive groups);
Madera, 73 (moderate);
Merced, 69 (moderate);
San Joaquin, 66 (moderate);
Stanislaus, 68 (moderate); and
Tulare, 86 (moderate).

Although winds can often cleanse the air of pollutants, unusually high winds such as those forecast tomorrow can kick up larger particles.

Fireplace use isn't prohibited in any county Wednesday, but a voluntary curtailment is in effect in Kings, where wood burning is discouraged.

Agricultural burning will be prohibited throughout the Valley, and hazard-reduction burning will be prohibited below 3,000 feet.

Due in part to innovative controls adopted by the Air District's governing board and the efforts of industries throughout the Valley, the air basin is on the verge of attaining the federal health-based standard for PM10. District measures such as the agriculture Conservation Management Practices and the fugitive dust regulation have helped reduce particle pollution significantly in the Valley.

"An unusual event like this could overwhelm the dust controls that farmers, the ag community and other business operators have worked hard to implement over the past ten years," said Scott Nester, director of planning for the Air District.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.

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