

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

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Weather sections

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First-ever wood-burning ban issued in Merced, Stanislaus **Wood burning prohibited in all but one Valley county**

(Modesto, CA) - For the first time since the adoption of the Check Before You Burn program, the Valley Air District is prohibiting the use of wood-burning fireplaces, inserts and heating stoves in Merced and Stanislaus counties. The mandatory curtailment is in effect from midnight Thursday to midnight Friday.

A mandatory curtailment is also in effect today for Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties. The public is asked, however, to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning heaters and fireplaces tomorrow in San Joaquin County.

The mandatory curtailment in Merced and Stanislaus counties has been prompted by an air-quality forecast of 152 in Merced and 153 in Stanislaus on the Air Quality Index. At that level, air quality is unhealthy for the general public. Stagnant air and poor dispersion have caused particulates to build up, making air quality poor.

Tomorrow's curtailments in Merced and Stanislaus counties are the first in the northern region of the San Joaquin Valley Air District since the start of the Check Before You Burn program in November 2003. Violations can result in fines.

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. When air quality is expected to be unhealthy for the general public, the Air District prohibits the use of wood-burning fireplaces, inserts and heating stoves.

Mandatory curtailments do not apply to: devices that use natural gas or propane exclusively; homes that don't have connections to natural-gas service; homes in areas 3,000 feet or higher in elevation; homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat; and cooking devices.

The daily wood-burning status is issued on a county-wide basis and 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.

When wood burning is allowed, it should be done as cleanly as possible, by using devices manufactured to meet the EPA's July 1990 emissions standards or pellet-fueled heaters, or by burning manufactured firelogs in open fireplaces. It is illegal to burn garbage or treated wood either in a fireplace or outdoors at any time. Additionally, the wood-burning curtailment program should not be confused with other Air District programs that regulate hazard-reduction burning, prescribed burning and agricultural burning.

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