

## **Health roundup: Local officials call second Air Alert, more**

Excerpt from Bakersfield Californian article, Monday, Sept. 9, 2013

Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District called the second Air Alert of 2013 Monday morning, and it will continue through Wednesday.

Air officials say increasing ozone levels and the possible impact of smoke from lingering wildfires prompted the air alert. The alert is in effect in the valley portion of Kern County along with San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties.

Air alerts are called when conditions that lead to ozone formation — such as high temperatures and stagnant air flow — occur, a news release said. That puts the valley at risk of exceeding federal ozone standards, and that can lead to hefty fines.

Residents can help keep ozone levels down by avoiding idling when dropping off or picking children up from school, carpooling and avoiding drive-throughs.

## **Smoke from two wildfires worsens valley air**

Modesto Bee, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013

Smoke from not one but two wildfires is sinking into the northern San Joaquin Valley, prompting pollution-control officials to issue an air alert.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District on Monday issued the alert, in effect through Wednesday in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties, and part of Kern County.

The Rim fire, burning in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties, grew overnight to 253,332 acres. More than 3,000 firefighters remain at the blaze, the third-largest in California history. The fire, caused by a hunter's illegal campfire, started Aug. 17. It remains 80 percent contained.

On Sunday, a second fire broke out on the west side of the valley. The Morgan fire, burning southeast of Clayton in Contra Costa County, had consumed 1,500 acres and was 10 percent contained Monday. Authorities said 100 residences were threatened; mandatory evacuations were in place for several neighborhoods.

This week's high temperatures — expected to be in the mid-90s through at least Wednesday — along with increased emissions and stagnant airflow, contribute to the formation of ozone in the valley. High ozone levels pose a health hazard and put the area at risk for exceeding the federal one-hour ozone standard, which in turn can trigger a federal penalty. Drivers would pay the \$29 million penalty through a \$12 addition to their DMV registration fee. Businesses also would face fee increases.

"We are at an extremely critical point in our journey to meet this standard," Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director and air pollution control officer, said in a news release. "As we get nearer to the end of ozone season, it becomes even more important to avoid an exceedance."

Officials have asked residents to refrain from unnecessary driving or car idling and to limit driving in the early morning and late evening hours.

In addition to fire, smoke and ozone troubles, some people may find their respiratory systems reacting to the start of the almond harvest, which stirs up clouds of dirt and dust.

## **Officials call Air Alert for S.J. Valley**

Stockton Record, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013

Officials on Monday called an Air Alert in the San Joaquin Valley, asking drivers to refrain from idling their vehicles and to consider carpooling or using alternative transportation.

The Valley pays \$29 million in penalties each year for failing to meet an old ozone pollution standard. Drivers pay part of the fine in the form of an extra \$12 attached to their registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

But the Valley might finally shed the penalty if it can get through the end of September without any new violations.

Wildfire smoke and increasing ozone levels prompted the Air Alert, which will last through Wednesday. "We are at an extremely critical point in our journey to meet this standard," said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the air district.

Later-summer ozone levels have been tied to back-to-school traffic and increased idling. In addition to the above steps, drivers are asked to avoid using drive-through services.

To learn more, visit [valleyair.org](http://valleyair.org).

## **Air alert in effect for San Joaquin Valley through Wednesday**

By Rob Parsons

Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, Sept. 2013

San Joaquin Valley residents suffering with chronic breathing conditions should stay indoors this week, health officials said Monday.

"Keep doors and windows shut and don't let in outside air," Dr. Mohan Reddy said.

A mix of lingering wildfire smoke, harvest season particulates and increasing ozone pollution, commonly known as smog, caused the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue an air alert throughout the valley Monday.

The district's primary concern Monday was the smog, according to Anthony Presto, a district spokesman.

Presto described smog as a corrosive gas that damages lung tissue and said the recent increasing levels triggered Monday's alert.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, smog forms when emissions from vehicles, industrial facilities, electric utilities and gasoline vapors combine and bake in hot weather.

Smog typically reaches unhealthy levels during the summer, when the weather heats up and air flow stagnates, Presto said.

"We're seeing our biggest surge taking place now because school has started again and there's an increase in traffic," Presto said.

Officials took precautions Monday at John C. Fremont Charter School in Merced.

"We had a list of students with respiratory issues and they were let into the air-conditioned library," said Curt DuBois, the school's learning director. "We had some students in there, but no major respiratory issues so far that I'm aware of."

Pollution experts said residents should avoid vehicle idling, carpool with friends and family, use alternative transportation and avoid drive-through services.

"Turn off your engine when picking up or dropping off kids at school, and park and go into the business instead of using the drive-through," Presto said.

The air alert remains in effect through Wednesday.

Smog is not the only air-quality concern in the Valley this week.

Lingering wildfire smoke from the Rim fire along with fires burning on Mount Diablo and in Tulare County will likely affect breathing in Merced for several days at least, city Fire Chief Mike McLaughlin said.

Although smog levels typically peak during the day and fall at night, smoke from fire does exactly the opposite, authorities said.

"It's kind of a double-whammy," Reddy said. "There's also a lot of harvesting going on, which also has an effect."

Reddy has specialized in asthma treatment in Merced since 1978.

He said respiratory conditions in the Valley seem less severe this year.

“But we’ll probably have to wait until sometime in October for the air to really clear up,” Reddy said.

Historically, the San Joaquin Valley consistently contends with Los Angeles for the worst air quality in the nation, pollution experts said.

“It’s not a title we enjoy holding,” Presto said.

Los Angeles produces far more pollution than the San Joaquin Valley, but regional winds also circulate more, cleaning out its air basin, he said.

Presto said Valley air conditions have improved steadily since the 1990s when industrial and vehicle emission standards increased.

“We enjoy much better air quality now,” Presto said, “but we still need residents to do everything they can to reduce emissions.”

## **Smoke, ozone prompts San Joaquin Valley air alert**

Lodi News Sentinel, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — Air quality officials are warning San Joaquin Valley residents of potential health hazards due to increasing ozone levels and smoke from lingering wildfires.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued an air alert — the second this year — on Monday for San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties and parts of Kern County.

Officials advise people to reduce prolonged exposure to the air and strenuous activities.

High ozone levels also put the Valley at risk for exceeding the 1-hour federal ozone standard, which can trigger an annual \$29 million federal penalty, paid by an assessment on businesses and through a \$12 annual vehicle registration fee for drivers from Stockton to Bakersfield.

The warning is in effect through Wednesday evening.

[Fresno Bee and Modesto Bee Editorial, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013](#)

## **Our View: Hazy sky isn’t the only air quality problem in valley**

The massive Rim fire in the Sierra and a much smaller fire at Mount Diablo get the blame for the hazy sky over the Northern San Joaquin Valley this week, and coupled with a sudden hot streak, it’s enough to make people want to stay inside.

They also need to use their cars as little as possible because the other issue – not readily visible – is a high ozone level that is a health hazard for people with asthma and other health problems, and that threatens an otherwise good summer we’ve had in terms of meeting federal air standards.

It’s the high ozone level that has prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue an air alert at least through Wednesday. Residents are asked to combine errands into as few vehicle trips as possible, carpool and not let their cars idle, as tempting as that might be to leave the air conditioner running. One group that the air district is trying to reach with the air alert message is parents who drive their children to and from school and then leave their cars idling while they wait in the parking lot or on a side street.

Employers are asked to take steps, too, such as letting employees work from home or ordering lunches so they don’t drive at noon.

Smoke from the Rim fire wasn’t much of a factor the last two weeks, but now it’s the larger contributor of haze and small particulate matter in the Valley air, according to air district spokesman Anthony Presto. The Mount Diablo fire had burned almost 4,000 acres by Monday afternoon. San Joaquin, Stanislaus and northern Merced counties are sandwiched between the two, which is why smoke is inevitable.

The almond harvest also contributes to the haze.

The high ozone level is the result of man-made causes, especially vehicle emissions, plus high temperatures and stagnant air flow. Valley residents all pay \$12 per year extra on their annual vehicle registration fees because of past violations of the federal ozone standards. The only positive aspect of the fine is that the money collected doesn't go to Washington, D.C., but is invested here in the Valley toward new school buses, replacement engines and other strategies to reduce pollution.

So far this year, the Valley has not exceeded the one-hour ozone standard, Presto said. We want to keep that record intact, in order to avoid another fine in the future. Not to mention, we need to show concern for our own health and that of family, friends and neighbors with heart or lung ailments. It's a simple request: Drive as little as possible.

To receive air alert notifications, call (800) 766-4463 or subscribe to the Air Alert email list at [www.valleyair.org/list.list.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/list.list.htm).

## **Bad Air Alert in San Joaquin Valley Triggered by Idling Cars, Not Smoldering Wildfires**

by [Lonnie Wong](#)

Fox 40 News, Monday, Sept. 9, 2013

MODESTO – The San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District says it's issued a bad air alert from Fresno to Stockton that is in effect until Wednesday. It's not the recent fires that is driving the alert, but instead high levels of ozone that is common this time of year.

Ozone is a corrosive chemical that is mainly caused by combustible fuel engines. It can be harmful to sensitive groups like the elderly and those with respiratory problems.

Ozone levels commonly go up right when school starts. District spokesperson Anthony Presto said there is a strong correlation between spikes in ozone levels and the early afternoon hours when parents pick-up kids from school.

At Dena Boer School in Salida there were lines of cars on the curb. Some parents were had their engines turned off and the windows rolled down. But many had their cars on idling with the air conditioning on during the hot afternoon.

"It's something we have to do," said Darlene Cowell, a grandmother who picks up a 9-year-old granddaughter each day. She has two smaller grand kids with her.

She knows idling is bad for the air, but she said the comfort of her grand kids is more important.

"I can't sit there with the windows rolled down. It's too uncomfortable for them in their car seats," said Cowell.

Many people don't know that the district has a \$29 million federal penalty assessed against, which translates to a \$12 fine for each vehicle registered from the district — which includes San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare Counties.

"If we want to see the fine go away, we have to work together to reduce ozone pollution. It's really in the hands of valley residents," said Presto.

That includes not using the drive-thru while going for fast food, using car pools, bringing lunch from home instead of eating out, and of course turning off the engine while waiting for school kids despite the heat.

While particulate matter pollution which includes smoke has not reached alarming levels, that doesn't mean it isn't a concern. Although air monitors in the northern part of the district are not measuring high levels of particulates, the wind and the fire burning currently on Mt. Diablo are unpredictable.

Presto advises monitoring local conditions. That can be done with the aid of the [www.valley.org](http://www.valley.org) website and going the the RAAN button to see real time measurements in different parts of the district.

He said smoke from the Rim Fire near Yosemite is still a factor along with the Morgan Fire at Mt. Diablo.

"We are kind of sandwiched between two wildfires and they are impacting some valley residents and not others," said Presto.

## **Air alert: Smoke, ozone on the rise in San Joaquin Valley**

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Monday, Sept. 9, 2013

Facing the double whammy of ozone and smoke, air quality leaders have declared the second air-pollution alert of summer for the San Joaquin Valley from Stockton to Bakersfield.

The alert will run through Wednesday as the region swelters in temperatures forecast above 100 degrees with only light breezes -- conditions that lead to corrosive ozone pollution.

The sprawling Rim fire in Stanislaus National Forest and Yosemite National Park also is sending smoke and ozone-making gases into the Valley. At 253,332 acres, the fire is the third largest on record in California.

People with heart and lung problems should stay indoors when smoke and ozone are spiking, health authorities say. Residents are urged to follow air quality developments in their area on the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's online reporting system. Dr. A.M. Aminian, a long-time allergist in Fresno, said his patient load increased Monday, as people with asthma and other lung problems came in for treatment. He said the smoke, ozone and heat are aggravating symptoms.

"I advise people to take a shower when they get home from work to get all the particles off them," Aminian said. "Remember to push the recirculation button in your car so you don't get outside air. And anyone having a lung problem shouldn't let it go too far. See a doctor."

In these conditions, the ozone readings could climb above the federal one-hour threshold for the first time this summer, say district leaders.

Last month as traffic picked up for school, the district announced the season's first alert, which are only warnings and carry no mandatory restrictions. The one-hour standard was not breached.

If the air basin gets through the warm season without exceeding the one-hour standard, it would end a \$29 million annual penalty. The penalty is paid mostly by motorists in registration fees.

Air district leaders urge residents to carpool and cut down on other ozone-making activities, such as using gasoline-powered lawn equipment or idling at drive-through services.

"We are at an extremely critical point in our journey to meet this standard," said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director.

The Valley has exceeded the more health-protective federal eight-hour ozone standard for five days in a row, though this summer has not been as bad as most. The region has breached the eight-hour standard 75 times this summer.

The goal is to eliminate the exceedances.

September is known for sudden ozone spikes in the Valley. In 2011, ozone exceeded the one-hour standard four times -- the last of which was on Sept. 29 that year.

Air-quality leaders say the Valley this summer has a big opportunity to finally achieve the one-hour standard and end the annual penalty, which began two years ago.

"As we get nearer to the end of ozone season, it becomes even more important to avoid an exceedance," Sadredin said.

## **Air tankers help corral Angora Fire Retardant lines laid around blaze**

Staff reports

Porterville Recorder, Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013

Quick work by six air tankers flying out of the Porterville Airport helped to corral the Angora Fire discovered burning Sunday in the Golden Trout Wilderness in Sequoia National Forest.

As of noon Monday, the air tankers were put on standby as hand crews and helicopters worked to extinguish the two-day old fire burning just north of the Fish Fire, which burned in the area last month. However, the tankers were put back into service later Monday afternoon after the fire heated up on the east side. The flare-up was quickly extinguished.

As of early Monday, the Angora Fire covered just over 100 acres. It is believed to be caused by one of the many lightning strikes to hit that area in mid-August. It is burning on the western side of Angora Mountain, which climbs above 10,000 feet.

Air tanker pilot William Taylor said the six air tankers were able to surround the fire with retardant.

“They got a good handle on it,” he said while waiting orders at the Porterville Airport. He said firefighters have also been aided by the fire burning into a rocky area with less fuel.

The fire was discovered around noon on Sunday. It was 20 percent contained by Monday afternoon.

Four hotshot crews — Springville, Kern Valley, Horseshoe Meadow and Fulton — along with 10 smoke jumpers out of the Porterville Air Attack base are working to fully suppress the fire. A total of 109 personnel were working the fire Monday.

Crews are staying out all night on the fire line while they work to fully suppress this fire as safely and quickly as possible, reported Denise Alonzo with the Sequoia National Forest.

Helicopters from Kernville and Peppermint are shuttling crews to the fire, which is burning in the back country where there is no road access. An air attack plane is directing the air tankers in dropping retardant and two helicopters dropping water to help slow the spread of the fire while crews on the ground construct fire line in an effort to contain it. A seventh air tanker arrived from Montana on Monday. Air tankers flew past 8 p.m. Sunday.

Forest officials anticipate the need to close the Deep Creek Trail east of Lion Meadow travelling north to Coyote Peaks due to the Angora Fire. Additional trail closures may be put in place if this fire continues to spread.

Several spot fires are located along the edge of the Coyote Lakes Trail (32E05) which poses a serious risk for travelers in the back country. Forest officials are closing that trail from its intersection with trail 32E02 east of Lion Meadows north to Coyote Peaks. The Deep Creek Trail (32E06) north of 32E02 east of Round Meadow will also be closed to keep backpackers from walking into the fire's path if it spreads towards the west.

Back country travelers planning a trip into the Golden Trout Wilderness should contact the Western Divide Ranger District at 539-2607 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. for latest fire and trail closure information prior to travel. For a map of the closure area check [inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3729/](http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3729/).

The areas closed during the Fish Fire were mostly opened late Friday, except the Willow Meadow cutoff trail, which remains closed. Travelers need to stay on the trails near the Fish Fire area for their safety. There are still hot spots smoldering in the burned area, trees that may fall having been weakened by fire and rolling debris loosened from burned vegetation.

The Angora Fire does not pose a threat to campgrounds or roads most often travelled by visitors, however, its smoke is adding to the unhealthy air quality, as the Rim Fire burning east of Stockton was sending smoke into the Valley and Tulare County.

Smoke may be visible from the surrounding communities throughout the day and is likely to settle into the valleys overnight and in the morning hours. Information on air quality and measures to take to reduce exposure to smoke can be found on [www.valleyair.org/Home.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/Home.htm).

## **Smoke, ozone prompts San Joaquin Valley air alert**

By Associated Press

S.F. Chronicle, Sacramento Bee and Contra-Costa Times Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013

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