

## **Sierra wildfires trigger warning of unhealthy San Joaquin Valley air**

Fresno Bee, Monday, Jun. 17, 2013

Local air officials issued a health caution Monday because of smoke from wildfires in the Sierra Nevada.

Blazes in the foothills could affect the air quality in eastern parts of Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties, including the foothill and mountain areas, said officials with the San Joaquin Air Valley Pollution Control District.

In addition, eastern portions of the Valley floor may be affected during overnight Monday, officials said.

The health caution will remain in place until the fires are out.

"Our standard is, if you can see smoke and smell smoke, you are being affected," said Samir Sheikh, the district's director of air quality analysis.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

Dr. Kelvin Lee, a Kaiser Permanente-Fresno allergy specialist, said smoke is a major irritant to lungs and small particles in the air can cause the heart and lungs to work harder to supply the body with oxygen.

People with lung and heart conditions should stay inside with air conditioning, if possible, Lee said. Those who use inhalers for asthma should use them regularly, he said.

People with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure, air officials said. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

Residents can check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the district's website to subscribe for free.

## **Barely contained blaze threatens numerous homes in foothills**

By Erin Tracy

Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, Jun. 18, 2013

More than 700 firefighters are battling two wildland blazes in the foothills of Madera and Mariposa counties, one of which is threatening hundreds of homes.

State fire officials say the Carstens fire, which started Sunday, has burned 1,600 acres about six miles northeast of Mariposa along Highway 140, one of the main routes into Yosemite National Park. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection listed the fire as just 15 percent contained Monday evening.

"The crews are working really hard and taking care of business," said Troy Cheek, a firefighter with Cal Fire who worked for 36 hours straight, from the start of the fire. "We're using everything in our arsenal to stop this fire. A lot of us live around here."

Mandatory evacuations are in place for more than 150 homes; others are under an evacuation warning.

Residents who were evacuated Sunday live in the areas of Hites Cove, Jerseydale and Scott Road.

Ed Helms was celebrating Father's Day on Sunday at his home in Hites Cove with his wife and three adult children when they were given notice to evacuate.

"We had to leave the steaks we were cooking on the barbecue to pack up and get out," he said.

He and his wife, their daughter who lives with them and a daughter who lives next door loaded family pictures, legal documents and pets into their vehicles. "Anything that couldn't be replaced," Helms said.

The family stayed with Helms' son in Mariposa.

"As we were leaving, right when we got down about a mile from our house, we looked behind us and could see the flames coming over the range," he said. "It's hard having to drive away from your home."

A search-and-rescue worker posted a notice on a tree in front of the Helms home that listed the number of people and pets that live there.

Between the Helms and their daughters, they took six dogs, but a cat that couldn't be found in time was left behind.

Helms said the helpless feeling of leaving his home has been compounded by the lack of information about the status of the property.

He learned Monday afternoon that the fire had shifted away from his neighborhood, but he doesn't know when he and his family will be able to return.

Additional evacuations were ordered Monday night for the Lushmeadows neighborhood, east of East Westfall Road, Triangle Road to Triangle Park Drive and Darrah Road to North Valley View.

An evacuation center is open at Mariposa Elementary School to accommodate residents of some 500 homes threatened by the fire.

State fire spokesman Daniel Berlant said the fire is being driven by high winds. It started off Carstens Road, east of Highway 140 near Midpines in the Sierra National Forest.

The smaller Rolling Hills fire, meanwhile, burned about 482 acres near the Madera County city of Friant. As of 8 p.m. Monday, that fire was 90 percent contained, according to Cal Fire. Highway 41 from State Route 145 to O'Neals Road closed about 1:30 p.m. Monday and remained closed throughout the evening.

The cause of both fires is under investigation.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a smoke warning for eastern parts of Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties.

"Our standard is, if you can see smoke and smell smoke, you are being affected," said Samir Sheikh, the air district's director of air quality analysis.

A haze of smoke was visible east of Modesto on Monday afternoon.

Smoke from fires produces fine particulate matter that can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and an increased risk of heart attack or stroke, according to the district.

## **Air officials issue health caution because of smoke from fires**

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Jun.17 2013

Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health caution statement Monday because smoke from two wildfires in the Sierra Nevada is making its way into the air basin.

The health caution will be in effect until the fires are out, according to an air district news release.

"Our standard is, if you can see smoke and smell smoke, you are being affected," Samir Sheikh, the district's director of air quality analysis, said in the news release.

The wildfires are burning in Madera and Mariposa counties.

Smoke might impact the eastern parts of five counties, including Kern, and foothill and mountain areas. The statement also noted that the eastern part of the valley floor may be impacted during overnight hours.

Smoke from fire produces PM2.5, which can cause health problems.

"Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions," the statement said.

Find more information on conditions at: [valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan\\_landing.htm](http://valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan_landing.htm).

## **Fire continues to rage in Mariposa County**

Sierra Star, Monday, Jun. 17,2013

A fire started around 2:12 p.m., Sunday, June 16 off Carstens Road, east of Highway 140 in the Midpines area of Mariposa County, according to Cal Fire. As of 10:25 a.m., Monday, June 17, more than 900 acres have burnt and the fire is at 15% containment.

Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service responded with more than 700 fire personnel, along with 143 fire engines, two helicopters, 21 dozers, and four water tenders.

Direct line construction is the primary tactic being used by firefighters as well as backfiring as conditions allow, according to Rebecca A. Garcia, public affairs officer for the Sierra National Forest.

“The fire is exhibiting extreme fire behavior, to include fire whirls and strong adverse winds,” Garcia said. “The biggest challenges facing firefighters today (June 17) will be the predicted low relative humidity and windy conditions.”

About 150 structures have been threatened and evacuations have been made for Hites Cove, Jerseydale, Clarks Valley, Triangle Road, and Scott Road.

A Red Cross evacuation station has been set up at the Mariposa Elementary School, 5044 Jones Street, and is offering cots to sleep on, blankets, food and water.

Road closures include: Highway 140 at Triangle Road, Carlton at Triangle Road, Silva at Triangle Road and Darrah at Triangle Road.

So far no structures have been damaged or destroyed and there have been no injuries.

“There have been a series of undesired fires of late due to barbecues and lawn mowers,” Garcia said. “Due to dry forest conditions, everyone needs to be fire conscious and stay vigilant, exercise fire safety.”

Garcia said that, based on the complexity of the fire and potential for growth, the South Central Sierra Interagency Incident Management Team will assume command of the incident at 6 p.m., Monday, June 17.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Because of the fire’s smoke emissions, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a cautionary health statement.

“Our standard is, if you can see smoke and smell smoke, you are being affected,” said Samir Sheikh, the Air District’s director of air quality analysis.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

Residents can check their nearest air monitor at [www.valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan\\_landing.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/Programs/RAAN/raan_landing.htm) or call (559) 230-6000.

## **Central Valley fires make Tulare County air unsafe**

Staff Report

Visalia Times-Delta, Tuesday, Jun.18, 2013

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a health warning as two wildfires in the Sierra Nevada are sending smoke emissions to the air basin. The wildfires are burning in Madera and Mariposa counties and smoke may impact the eastern parts of Tulare, Kern, Fresno, Madera and Merced counties, including the foothills and mountain areas. Eastern portions of the Valley floor may be affected overnight, the air control district said.

“Our standard is, if you can see smoke and smell smoke, you are being affected,” said Samir Sheikh, the air district’s director of air quality analysis.

The air control district said fire produces fine-particle matter that can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. The air control

district recommends those with heart or lung disease to follow their doctor's advice for dealing with particulate exposure. Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, the air control district said.

Information: 230-6000.

### **Status of wildfires**

One wildfire, near the main route into Yosemite National Park in the Central Sierra foothills, forced the evacuation of about 150 houses and threatened others, a state fire official said on Monday.

More than 700 firefighters are battling the Carstens fire, which began Sunday afternoon and has burned about 1 1/2 square miles or 900 acres, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection spokesman Daniel Berlant said.

With more than 140 engines and two helicopters on the scene, the crews have so far contained about 15 percent of the blaze that's burning in an area about 6 miles northeast of Mariposa off Highway 140, Berlant added.

"The strong winds and dry conditions have been major factors. The fire moved quickly," said Berlant, adding that Monday's weather forecasts estimated gusts of up to 20 miles per hour.

No structures have been burned, and the exact cause of the fire has yet to be determined, Berlant said.

Four stretches along the oft-used Triangle Road are currently closed. The Red Cross has also set up a shelter in Mariposa.

Meanwhile, a smaller fire near Friant has burned 482 acres. The Rolling Hills fire is 80 percent contained.

## **SoCalGas Joins Air Quality Agencies, California Energy Commission To Develop Heavy-Duty, Near-Zero Emission Natural Gas Engines**

By Southern California Gas Co.

Sacramento Bee, Wednesday, Jun.12, 2103

LOS ANGELES, June 12, 2013 -- Southern California Gas Co. (SoCalGas) has joined the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) and the California Energy Commission (CEC) in issuing a request for proposals (RFP) to support the development of ultra-clean natural gas engines for a variety of heavy-duty vehicle applications in the South Coast Air Basin (SCAB) and San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB).

"Natural gas will play a vital role in advancing transportation solutions that support California's goals and policies for emission reductions and a sustainable energy future," said Jeff Reed, director of business strategy and development for SoCalGas.

"Natural gas has a proven track record as a clean fuel in a wide range of vehicle types," said Barry Wallerstein, SCAQMD's executive officer. "This initiative will take natural gas engine technology to the next level to help us meet our clean air goals in the Southland."

The initiative, funded up to \$9 million by the participating agencies together with \$500,000 in matching funds from SoCalGas, aims to demonstrate natural gas engines capable of achieving aggressive, near-zero emission standards for on-road, heavy-duty vehicle applications suitable for refuse, goods movement, drayage, transit, or school bus applications.

The purpose of the RFP is to provide financial assistance to contractor teams to develop near-zero nitrogen oxide (NOx) emission heavy-duty natural gas engines, integrate the engines into heavy-duty vehicles chassis, and evaluate the performance of the vehicles in a variety of heavy-duty vehicle applications in the South Coast and San Joaquin Valley Air Basins. Proposals are due by July 24, 2013 and the complete RFP (bid #P2013-22) is available online at <http://www.aqmd.gov/rfp/index.html>.

"Innovative research and demonstration initiatives such as this will help to make it possible to harness the potential of abundant, low-cost natural gas for transportation applications, while advancing toward our

state's common goal of zero and near-zero emissions technologies. SoCalGas is pleased to be part of this effort along with our research partners," said Reed.

SoCalGas is co-hosting a free webinar on Wednesday, June 12 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. Pacific Time to discuss various natural gas engine technologies for heavy duty vehicle applications. To register or access the archived content, please visit: <http://naturalgastrucks.eventbrite.com/#>

## **Valley weathers heat without violating key smog standard**

Central Valley Business Times, Tuesday, Jun.11, 2013

There was some good news in all that heat that blanketed the Central Valley through the weekend: The San Joaquin Valley's air quality never exceeded the critical 1-hour federal standard for ozone.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials credit investment by businesses and the public for reducing emission during the record heat wave.

Since 1980, smog-causing air pollution from Valley businesses has been reduced by 80 percent, helping reduce the number of times air quality has failed to meet the increasingly stringent federal standards, the district says.

The improvement has been dramatic. Last year the Valley experienced only two "exceedances" of the 1-hour ozone standard compared to 56 in 1996.

"We are grateful for the tremendous sacrifice for and investment in air quality made by Valley businesses and residents," says Seyed Sadredin, the Air District's executive director and air pollution control officer.

Exceeding the 1-hour ozone standard triggers federal monetary penalties. Because of a handful of exceedances in 2010, the air basin was assessed a \$29 million annual penalty, which will be paid through fees on Valley businesses and residents.

Violations are still a threat during the late summer. Exceedances of the 1-hour ozone standard – which is set at 125 parts per billion – coincide with the start of the school year and increased back-to-school vehicle traffic.

In the coming months the District will work with schools and parents to reduce vehicle traffic and idling at school during this critical time. This will be done through a targeted outreach and incentive program known as the Healthy Air Living Schools program.