

Fires in Northern California, Oregon prompt air warning for valley

By Bee Staff Reports

Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Saturday, August 3, 2013

MODESTO — Fires burning in Northern California and Oregon have prompted air officials to issue a health cautionary statement for smoke impacts at various locations in the valley through the weekend.

The fires have the potential to send smoke to the northern region of the valley air basin, including Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced counties.

"As always, the best rule of thumb for residents is that if you can see and smell smoke, take appropriate precautions," said Samir Sheikh, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control 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 local conditions.

Residents can check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air quality.

Visit the Real-Time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website: www.valleyair.org/programs/raan/raan_landing.htm.

For more information, call the district's Modesto office at (209) 557-6400.

Smoke from wildfires clogging air in Northern San Joaquin Valley

By Doane Yawger

Fresno Bee, Sacramento Bee, Merced Sun-Star, Saturday, August 3, 2013

MERCED — Smoke from wildfires east of Fresno and in Northern California has blown into the Merced area in a big way and the haze is likely to last for several days.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said smoke has reached Level 4, which means the air is unhealthy for just about everyone, said Jaime Holt, a district spokeswoman. The district has a monitoring station in Merced.

In the valley, Merced had one of the worst visibility rankings Tuesday, according to meteorologist Jim Dudley of the National Weather Service office in Hanford.

At Merced's airport, visibility was only 3 miles, compared with 5-mile visibility figures for the Fresno and Hanford airports.

Robert McLaughlin, Mercy Medical Center Merced spokesman, said the hospital's emergency room hasn't seen a big increase in respiratory distress cases. However, if the smoke lasts more than a few days, the number of such cases likely will rise, he added.

Getting the blame for the visible haze in Merced is the Aspen fire burning in eastern Fresno County near Huntington Lake, along with fires burning in Northern California and Oregon.

The fires have prompted the air district to issue a health cautionary statement for smoke impacts throughout the air basin, which includes Merced, Madera, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties, as well as foothill and mountain areas.

Holt said the district recommends that Merced residents avoid outdoor activities and stay inside, with the windows closed. If people must be outside, they are urged to drink lots of water, take frequent breaks and try not to exert themselves.

Expected to linger

She said she can't predict if hazy conditions will worsen but said the haze is expected to last through the rest of the week and possibly into next week. If these conditions were occurring in the winter, the smoke would prompt a no-burn day designation from the air district, Holt said.

Air quality in the valley is expected to deteriorate in the coming days because of the smoke and a relatively stable weather pattern. The cautionary warning will remain in place until the fires are extinguished.

Dudley said he doesn't anticipate weather systems blowing the smoke out. There could be a little bit of clearing in the early evening, but smoke will spread across the valley again overnight.

He expects the stagnant weather patterns to continue for the next couple of days.

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

The air district said older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on local conditions.

Wildfire smoke fouls Valley air

Stockton Record, Saturday, August 3, 2013

Smoke from distant wildfires could remain a problem in the north San Joaquin Valley through the weekend, air quality officials said Friday.

The Aspen Fire near Huntington Lake is spewing smoke primarily into the south Valley, but fires in far Northern California and Oregon have the potential to send smoke to San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said.

The district issued a "health cautionary statement" and suggested that residents - especially older adults and children - should avoid prolonged activity if they can see and smell smoke.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issues health caution

Visalia Times-Delta, Saturday August 3, 2013

Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District have put out a health cautionary statement for smoke from wildfires at various locations in the Valley through the weekend. The Aspen Fire in Fresno County is sending smoke mostly through the San Joaquin River drainage areas, including Prather, Auberry and Shaver Lake. And fires in northern California and Oregon may send smoke to the northern part of the Valley, including counties of San Joaquin, Merced and Stanislaus. 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.

"As always, the best rule of thumb for residents is that if you can see and smell smoke, take appropriate precautions," said Samir Sheikh, the Air District's director of air quality analysis.

Local air quality can be checked at <http://www.valleyair.org>