

No-burn season arrives in San Joaquin Valley

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It's back and for its 16th season: the annual "Check Before You Burn" restrictions in the San Joaquin Valley.

The restrictions on using fireplaces and other wood-burning devices will run through February 2019.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issues a daily wood-burning status by county.

During winter, one of the largest sources of particulate pollution comes from residential wood burning. "The cooperation and understanding of Valley residents has made this the single most cost-effective clean air strategy the Air District has adopted," says Samir Sheikh, the District's executive director and air pollution control officer.

Valley residents wanting to switch out older wood-burning devices for a cleaner model can take advantage of the District's Burn Cleaner grants which provide \$1,000 for certified wood, pellet inserts, freestanding stoves or natural gas inserts or \$2,500 for eligible low-income applicants for all devices. An additional \$500 is available to all applicants for the installation costs on a natural gas device. To participate in this program please visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner.

"Residential wood smoke has significant impacts on public health, particularly in neighborhoods where residents live and play," says Mr. Sheikh. "By reducing wood burning and taking advantage of District grant programs to replace older high polluting devices, residents can play a key role in improving air quality in Valley neighborhoods and improving public health."

There are two exceptions to wood-burning prohibitions: If the residence does not have another source of heat or if the residence does not have access to natural-gas service (even if propane is used). Additionally, fireplace inserts or stoves that run solely on gas or propane, and never burn wood, continue to be exempt from the rule. Wood-burning declarations also apply to outdoor devices and chimineas.

When fire is desired, check before you burn

By Steven Mayer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Nov. 1, 2018

Some Bakersfield residents say it's a necessary check on the valley's chronic wintertime air pollution, while others assert it's a "nanny-state" intrusion on an individual's right to burn wood when fire is desired.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's annual wintertime "Check Before You Burn" program kicks off its 16th season Thursday, and a key component of the program — which runs Nov. 1 through the end of February — is a daily wood-burning declaration for each of the eight valley counties.

The three declaration levels are "No Burning for All," "No Burning Unless Registered" and "No Restrictions, Burning Discouraged."

"The cooperation and understanding of valley residents has made this the single most cost-effective clean air strategy the air district has adopted," Samir Sheikh, the district's executive director and air pollution control officer, said in a news release.

During the winter, one of the largest generators of the valley's air pollution comes from an otherwise pleasant source: the warm glow of the home hearth, the residential fireplace, as well as backyard bonfires and other outdoor fire pits.

Every emission counts when you live in the downwind end of a valley that traps air pollution close to the ground. In the winter, the inversion layer often traps particulate matter found in wood smoke at or near ground level, where we breathe.

Daily burn statuses are available by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), by downloading the free app "Valley Air" from the App Store, or valley residents may sign up for email notifications by visiting www.valleyair.org/CBYB.

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Exemptions are allowed in cases where a residence does not have another source of heat or does not have access to natural-gas service.