

## **Wildfires continue to bring smoke into the Valley**

Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, August 7, 2018

Smoke from the Ferguson Fire in Mariposa County and other fires is affecting air quality in locations throughout the entire San Joaquin Valley with especially severe conditions in the foothill and mountain communities. Local air pollution officials want to remind Valley residents that a health caution is in place and smoke impacts will continue until the fires are extinguished.

Wildfire smoke is a mixture of gases and fine, microscopic particles that can cause health problems including triggering asthma attacks, aggravating chronic heart and lung diseases and increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move inside to an air-conditioned environment.

Residents can use the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley address by visiting [myraan.com](http://myraan.com). The RAAN monitors are designed to detect the microscopic PM2.5 particles that exist in smoke. Ash pieces, however, are much larger in size and will not be detected. If an area is covered in ash, air quality should be considered "unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if the monitor reflects a lower reading.

The public can check the District's wildfire page at [www.valleyair.org/wildfires](http://www.valleyair.org/wildfires) for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. In addition, anyone can follow air quality conditions by downloading the free "Valley Air" app, available in the Apple store or Google Play.

For more information, visit [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or call a District office in Fresno (230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).

## **Heat and haze: Air quality impacted by fires, high pressure**

By Alexis Espinoza

Porterville Recorder, Wednesday, August 8, 2018

Smoke from the Ferguson fire and other fires has been creeping into the valley causing severe conditions for residents.

The air outside has been visibly hazy and murky due to an abundance of smoke that is floating into the valley.

Kevin Durfee, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Hanford, explained that the pressure from the atmosphere is creating a dome-like cover over the smoke causing it to become stagnant. The smoke, in return, has no where to go so remains stuck in the air.

"The weather pattern that is producing the bad air quality is going to change very little over the next seven days," informed Durfee. "On a daily basis we are going to get an accumulation of particulate matter day by day unless we have something to mix and stir it up, but it doesn't look like that is going to happen for quite a while."

Durfee also cautioned that the upcoming temperatures for the week will be over 100 degrees. Mixing the heat and the haze could potentially be a danger to sensitive lungs or persons who will be outside for extended periods of time.

The air has recently been bad enough for a health advisory to be issued. Air pollution officials at San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District advise that a limited amount of time be spent outside.

"People who have asthma or respiratory issues are especially sensitive to these kinds of conditions," said Cassandra Melching, outreach and communications representative at San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Melching had a list of advice to protect from breathing in too much of the bad air.

"In times like this we want to refrain from outdoor exposure. Stay inside where there is cool filtered air. Make sure you are staying hydrated and make sure you are changing out your air filters frequently. Because of these forest fires air filters are getting dirty quicker than usual," she said.

She also advised that an eye should be kept on the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN). RAAN tracks the air quality and is updated every hour. RAAN levels of 4 or higher are considered unhealthy.

Porterville currently sits at a RAAN level of 3, but has spiked up to a level of 5 during the night due to plumes of travelling smoke.

Breathing in the toxins of the ash from the fires and collected smoke can be devastating to the body. It can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases and increase the risk of having a stroke or heart attack.

"The main thing is that this is a situation that is a day-after-day thing," Durfee stated. "It has been going on for many days and it's the longevity of it that makes a difference. That is what really stresses the human body."

Hopes of cleaner air are dim as fires continue to burn and particulate matter builds. It is highly advised to breathe in as little of the air as possible by limiting outdoor exposure.

"Even healthy people, if they're outside exerting any physical activity or spending much time outdoors, it is definitely going to be a detriment to their health breathing all the bad air in," said Durfee. "It is advised to buy a mask especially if you will be outside. The matter in the air collects in your lungs and basically amplifies any existing respiratory problems."