

Wind gusts knock out power in Bakersfield, hit 72 mph over mountain peaks

By John Cox

The Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, December 17, 2019

Gusty winds knocked out power around Bakersfield Tuesday and otherwise caused minor disturbances on what turned out to be a good day for local air quality.

The National Weather Service said winds blowing as fast as 72 mph in the mountain peaks above The Grapevine were caused by a low pressure system west of the Bay Area combining with high pressure in Southern California.

"It's kind of similar to a Santa Ana situation like they have in Southern California," said Jim Dudley, a meteorologist in the agency's Hanford offices.

"It's going to move through, bring us some clouds, but we're not expecting any rain in Bakersfield or even the mountains," he added.

A wind advisory was in effect until 10 p.m. Tuesday. After that, Dudley said, no notable weather events were expected locally until perhaps early next week, when there is a chance of rain and some mountain snow.

The wind speed at Meadows Field Airport was reported at 51 mph, according to the weather service, which also said 61-mph gusts were recorded Cummings Valley.

Winds as fast as those that blew through Kern Tuesday typically come just once or twice per year, he said.

"It's not unprecedented," Dudley said. Gusts on the Grapevine have been as high as 80 mph, he said.

No major weather-related problems were reported in Kern County. But Bakersfield's police and fire departments did say the wind caused scattered power outages.

A public information officer with the Bakersfield Fire Department said the agency received four reports of power outages Tuesday.

The Bakersfield Police Department's on-duty public information officer said power outages affected traffic signals and that the wind blew a few items into roadways but that otherwise disruptions were minor.

A spokeswoman for Pacific Gas and Electric Co. confirmed the winds caused morning power outages.

She shared the utility's tips about avoiding downed power lines and calling 9-1-1 to report them. She also advised watching out for damaged trees and other hazards and asked that people experiencing a power outage use battery-powered flashlights instead of candles.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District classified Tuesday's regional air quality as "good" even as it discouraged residential wood-burning. It forecast Wednesday's air quality as "moderate" and said wood-burning would be prohibited for anyone except for registered fireplace users.