

District warns conditions not conducive to wood burning

The Hanford Sentinel, Tuesday, December 1, 2020

CENTRAL VALLEY — Local air officials are advising San Joaquin Valley residents that conditions are expected to remain cold, dry and stagnant throughout the week, causing PM2.5 (particulate matter pollution) emissions to accumulate, resulting in higher pollution concentrations throughout the Valley air basin, which includes the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion and the Frazier Park area of Kern.

Strong nighttime inversions and minimal winds this week trap pollutants on the Valley floor. “Stable conditions like those we are currently experiencing are one of the main challenges the San Joaquin Valley faces during the winter months,” said Samir Sheikh, Valley Air District Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer. “During times like this, residential wood smoke stays in your neighborhood, impacting your neighbors,” he added.

Residential wood burning is one of the Valley’s largest sources of wintertime PM 2.5 emissions and shown to have a direct effect on neighborhood air quality and public health. The District warns that adherence to the Check before You Burn Program is critical to prevent air pollution from reaching unhealthy levels and asks that residents avoid heating their homes by burning wood, if possible. Refraining from the use of any outdoor wood burning devices is also urged. This includes fire pits, outdoor fireplaces and chimeneas.

Exposure to PM 2.5 can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution.

Check Before You Burn runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February every year, reducing PM 2.5 emissions from residential wood smoke. During that time, the District releases a daily, county-by-county wood burning declaration based on the air quality forecast. The three possible declarations are: No Burning For All, No Burning Unless Registered and Burning Discouraged. Individuals found burning when it is not allowed could receive a fine up to \$100 for first time violators.

Wood burning curtailments do not apply to natural gas devices. Residences in areas with no natural gas service or where wood burning is the sole source of heat are exempt. Areas where propane tanks are used are considered to be without natural gas service. Outdoor wood burning devices at all residences are still subject to daily restrictions, regardless of exemption status.

Daily burn information is available by visiting checkbeforeyouburn.org, by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by downloading the free “Valley Air” app on your mobile device.

Valley residents are encouraged to participate in the Burn Cleaner incentive program and receive as much as \$3,000 to upgrade from older, higher-polluting wood stoves and open-hearth fireplaces to EPA Certified wood, pellet or natural gas inserts and free-standing stoves. To participate in this program please visit www.valleyair.org/burncleaner.

Air district strongly discourages residents from burning wood

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is reminding Central Valley residents that current outdoor conditions are not conducive to burning wood.

In a news release sent Tuesday, the air district said air is expected to remain cold, dry and stagnant throughout the week, which causes high particulate matter pollution emissions to build and, in turn, higher pollution concentrations throughout the Central Valley. The regional warning includes the Frazier Park area of Kern County, the air district said.

Strong nighttime inversions and minimal winds also figure to trap pollutants on the valley floor, which can exacerbate the issue.

“Stable conditions like those we are currently experiencing are one of the main challenges the San Joaquin Valley faces during the winter months,” said Samir Sheikh, Valley Air District executive director and air pollution control officer. “During times like this, residential wood smoke stays in your neighborhood, impacting your neighbors.”

The news release stated that residential wood burning is one of the valley’s largest sources of wintertime particulate matter pollution emissions and has been shown to have a direct effect on the area’s air quality and public health.

The air district reiterated that adherence to the Check before You Burn Program is critical to prevent air pollution from reaching unhealthy levels. It asks that residents, when possible, avoid heating their homes by burning wood and refrain from the use of any outdoor wood burning devices including fire pits, outdoor fireplaces and chimineas.

Exposure to particulate matter pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, the air district said. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution, the news release stated.

Air quality officials ask residents to avoid burning

By Vongni Yang

Visalia Times-Delta, Wednesday, December 2, 2020

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District air officials are advising residents to avoid wood burning.

The district reported conditions are expected to remain cold, dry and stagnant throughout the week, causing particulate matter pollution (PM 2.5) emissions to accumulate, resulting in higher pollution concentrations throughout the Valley air basin, which includes the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and parts of Kern County.

Additionally, strong nighttime inversions and minimal winds this week trap pollutants on the Valley floor.

“Stable conditions like those we are currently experiencing are one of the main challenges the San Joaquin Valley faces during the winter months,” District Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer Samir Sheikh said in a statement. “During times like this, residential wood smoke stays in your neighborhood, impacting your neighbors.”

According to the air district, residential wood burning is one of the Valley’s largest sources of wintertime PM 2.5 emissions, which has shown to have a direct effect on neighborhood air quality and public health.

Residents should adhere to the "Check Before You Burn" program on the district's website.

Residents should avoid heating their homes by burning wood, if possible, to prevent air pollution from reaching unhealthy levels, the district said.

The district also urged residents to refrain from the use of any outdoor wood-burning devices, including fire pits, outdoor fireplaces and chimneys

The bad air can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, the district reported. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution, the district added.

The "Check Before You Burn" program runs from Nov. 1 through the end of February every year, reducing PM 2.5 emissions from residential wood smoke. Individuals found burning when it is not allowed could receive a fine up to \$100 for first-time violators.

Wood burning curtailments do not apply to natural gas devices. Residences in areas with no natural gas service or where wood burning is the sole source of heat are exempt.

Daily burn information is available by visiting checkbeforeyouburn.org, by calling 1-800-SMOG INFO (766-4463), or by downloading the free "Valley Air" app on your mobile device.

California utilities may cut power as fire danger looms

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Southern California utilities warned they may cut power to more than 300,000 customers as dry, gusty weather raises the threat of wildfire danger in the region.

The National Weather Service said there are critical fire conditions because of Santa Ana winds, low humidity and parched grass, trees and brush. Red flag conditions of extreme fire danger are expected in many areas beginning Wednesday night and could last into Saturday evening, especially in valleys and mountains, forecasters said.

Winds could reach 50 mph (80 kph), which could knock down trees and power lines, the weather service said.

Concerns that debris could hit electrical equipment or bring down lines and spark wildfires prompted Southern California Edison to warn that it is considering shutting off power to nearly 237,000 customers as a precaution during the windy period. Some outages could begin Wednesday night or Thursday and last into Saturday, the company said.

That's about 5% of the utility's 5 million customers and would affect the counties of Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Tulare and Ventura.

Last week, the utility cut power to more than 16,000 customers because of Santa Ana winds and fire danger.

San Diego Gas & Electric warned Tuesday that 88,720 customers could see days-long shutoffs as early as Wednesday night or Thursday morning.

Santa Ana winds blow from the interior toward the coast, creating potentially critical fire conditions with the combination of vegetation-withering low humidity and powerful gusts, especially below mountain passes and canyons.

Common in the fall but possible at other times, the winds have fanned many catastrophic wildfires.

California has already experienced a disastrous year of wildfires that have left more than 30 people dead and more than 10,000 homes and other buildings damaged or destroyed.