

# News Release

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>>City and assignment editors<<



**San Joaquin Valley**  
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

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## **New ozone scoring increases health protection** ***Reporting may show more “unhealthy” days***

**FRESNO** – The Valley Air District has adopted a more health-protective scoring system to provide Valley residents with early warning for upcoming bad air episodes. Each day, the Air District forecasts and publishes an air quality index (AQI) that indicates the severity of air quality conditions in various regions in the Valley. Residents and schools throughout the Valley have utilized the air district’s forecast to plan their outdoor activities according to the level of air pollution and their susceptibility to its effects.

The new scoring system, now recommended for nationwide use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, stems from research that illustrates the negative health effects from ozone exposure occur at lower levels than previously thought. Under the new scoring system, days that previously were classified as “good” air days may now be ranked as “moderate” and some “moderate” days may now be ranked as “unhealthy”.

“While the new scoring system provides a greater safety margin for the public, the more severe rankings under the new system should not be confused with worsening air quality in the Valley,” said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District’s executive director and air pollution control officer.

The AQI categories – green for “good,” yellow for “moderate,” orange for “unhealthy for sensitive groups,” and red for “unhealthy” -- are not changing, but the calculations used to determine those categories will be different. For example, under the old AQI scale, moderate air quality encompassed daily ozone concentrations between 65 parts per billion (ppb) and 84 ppb. Now, under the new AQI scale, the moderate range signifies lower, cleaner ozone concentrations, between 60 ppb and 75 ppb. Similarly, all categories on the AQI scale will shift to a more stringent, more health-protective calculation.

Despite significant progress in recent years, the Valley continues to face daunting challenges in achieving cleaner air through the Valley. The EPA recently announced that it is proposing that the Valley air basin be designated in attainment of particulate matter 10 microns and less (PM10) and that the Air District’s PM10 maintenance plan be accepted. The District’s Governing Board also approved a new, comprehensive plan to meet the federal standards for PM2.5 – fine particulate matter – this week. This will require major new controls on Valley businesses and residents, and will achieve the federal standards by 2014.

Ozone, or smog, is a summertime air pollution problem. Ozone season extends from May through September. The Air District’s ambitious, new initiative, Healthy Air Living, addresses that fact, and aims to expedite air clean-up and attain standards years ahead of deadline

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and San Joaquin Valley air basin portions of Kern. For assistance, contact the nearest District office in Modesto at (209) 557-6440, Fresno (559) 230-6000 or Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.