

News Release

For Immediate Release

Sept. 27, 2006



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

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Ash, smoke from Day Fire affecting southern Valley

(Bakersfield, CA) – A large wildfire in Ventura County that started on Sept. 4 is creating air-pollution problems in the southern San Joaquin Valley, and could create air-quality concerns as far north as Merced County. The Day Fire has grown to more than 150,000 acres and is 42 percent contained.

Meteorologists from the Valley Air District expect that smoke from the fire will continue working its way further north into the Valley this afternoon. A statement issued by the Air District on Sept. 8, when the fire was about 12,000 acres in size, warned residents of southern Kern County that smoke from the fire may create poor air quality for a few days in their region. The District issued a second health-cautionary statement about the fire Sept. 18. Now, as the fire has advanced toward Kern County, air impacts are continuing.

Due to the fire's increasing size, combined with winds continuing to come from the southeast and south, the smoke is expected to create poor air quality the next few days in the Valley portion of Kern County, as well as Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera and Merced counties. Falling ash is being reported in areas of Kern County.

"In general, if you can smell smoke, then it's probably at a strong enough concentration to cause health effects," said Shawn Ferreira, a District meteorologist. He added that the duration of the regional problem depends on wind conditions, and how long the fire burns. The fire might burn until rains arrive in Southern California, in October or November.

Exposure to smoke and other particle pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections. In people with heart disease, short-term exposure to particle pollution has been linked to heart attacks and arrhythmias, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Residents in affected areas are advised to use caution when smoke is present. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality when smoke is present. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged exposure, strenuous activities or heavy exertion.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the nearest District office: Modesto (209) 557-6400, Fresno (559) 230-6000 and Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.

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