

# News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley  
Air Pollution  
Control District

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**TO:**

**Local News and Weather sections**

## Valley Air Quality Unseasonably Poor

*(Fresno, California)* – Hot days and stagnant weather conditions in the San Joaquin Valley are producing poor air quality, which is expected to continue through early next week.

Since March 5, air quality has been deteriorating in Fresno, Madera, Merced, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern counties. Monitoring stations in these areas have recorded unusually high levels of particulate matter that is 2.5 microns and smaller (PM2.5). A micron is a millionth of a meter. When inhaled, PM2.5 can trigger asthma flares and heart attacks, lead to lung ailments such as bronchitis, and exacerbate existing lung conditions.

Air pollution levels considered unhealthy for sensitive groups have been recorded in Fresno, Visalia and Bakersfield on several days since March 5. Air quality is reported as a number on the Air Quality Index (AQI), whereby 0 to 50 is good; 51 to 100 is moderate; 101 to 150 is unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151 to 200 is unhealthy; and 200 or higher is very unhealthy.

The worst air pollution levels during this episode have been an AQI of 141 in Fresno on March 11; 110 in both Bakersfield and Fresno on March 10; and 112 in Visalia on March 13. Not all monitoring stations in the Valley air basin are equipped to record PM2.5 levels.

“We normally have air quality in the good to moderate range this time of year,” said Steve Shaw, an air quality project planner with the Valley Air District’s air quality analysis section. “But the stagnant conditions over this two-week period have lead to higher-than-expected concentrations of ammonia nitrate, carbon and other small particles.”

Changes expected in the weather should bring cleaner air to the area by the middle of next week. When air quality is forecast to be unhealthy for sensitive groups, children, the elderly, people with existing lung conditions and adults who exercise outdoors should modify their activities to reduce outdoor exertion levels.

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