

News Release

10-30-2006

For Immediate Release

TO:

Local News Sections



North District Media Contact - Modesto
Anthony Presto: (209) 557-6400

Central District Media Contact - Fresno
Kelly Hogan Morphy: (559) 230-6000

South District Media Contact - Bakersfield
Brenda Turner: (661) 326-6900

***Check Before You Burn* begins Wednesday**

Residents should call before lighting a fireplace or woodstove Tuesday night

Fresno, CA – Residents of the San Joaquin Valley are reminded to start checking their county’s wood-burning status daily before lighting a fireplace or stove that burns wood, pellets or manufactured logs.

The *Check Before You Burn* program begins its fourth season on Wednesday and runs through the end of February. The program helps reduce wintertime air pollution by either discouraging or prohibiting the use of wood fireplaces and pellet and woodstoves when air quality is expected to be unhealthy.

The season’s first wood-burning status will be issued Tuesday afternoon and will take effect at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday. The status is issued daily on a county-by-county basis and is in effect from midnight to midnight. It is available toll-free at 1-800 SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) or online at www.valleyair.org. Many local news outlets also provide the information as a public service.

Burning any solid fuel -- such as wood, manufactured firelogs or pellets -- is prohibited when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for everyone, or an Air Quality Index of 151 or higher. Burning wood in an open fireplace or older insert is discouraged on a voluntary basis when air quality is projected to be in the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” range, or an AQI between 101 and 150.

When wood burning is prohibited, violators may receive a Notice of Violation and be subject to fines. Fines for first-time violations start at \$50.

The restrictions do not apply to devices fueled exclusively by natural gas or propane; cooking stoves; homes in areas with no natural-gas service; homes at elevations of 3,000 feet or higher; and homes in which no other heating device exists and wood-burning is the sole source of heat.

The status applies to the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern.

“The public’s cooperation truly has helped improve wintertime air quality the past few years,” said Scott Nester, director of planning for the Air District, noting that the Valley recently attained two long-sought clean-air milestones for particulate matter. ‘We’re

confident that the public will do its part for Valley air quality again this winter, and that compliance with the wood-burning restrictions will continue to be excellent."

When the Air District adopted the program in 2003, it was anticipated that Valley residents could expect between four and 25 mandatory curtailments per season, depending on which county they live in. The number of actual curtailments has been as follows:

County	Mandatory Curtailments ("Prohibited") 2005-06 season [2004-05, 2003-04]	Notices of Violation 2005-06 season [2004-05, 2003-04] (None issued in 2003-04)	Voluntary Curtailments ("Discouraged") 2005-06 season [2004-05, 2003-04]
Fresno	11 [2, 2]	71 [26]	34 [44, 53]
Kern (valley only)	16 [2, 1]	35 [10]	19 [37, 49]
Kings	13 [0, 0]	7 [0]	23 [6, 1]
Madera	2 [0, 0]	1 [0]	28 [13, 10]
Merced	2 [0, 0]	0 [0]	22 [15, 13]
San Joaquin	1 [0, 0]	9 [0]	14 [11, 6]
Stanislaus	3 [0, 0]	16 [0]	20 [28, 32]
Tulare	9 [2, 0]	20 [8]	28 [25, 23]

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.

#