

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

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sections**

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High winds prompt health warning

Air District cautions that air pollution levels climbing Monday

Unusual weather and high winds throughout Kern, Tulare and Kings counties have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement though Monday evening, when rains are expected to arrive in the southern portions of the San Joaquin Valley and minimize blowing dust.

This high-wind event is expected to affect only the valley portions of Kern and Tulare counties and all of Kings County. "Strong southeasterly winds -- forecast to be 20 to 40 miles per hour, with locally higher gusts -- can kick up dust in these areas and create unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10," said Shawn Ferreria, a meteorologist for the District.

Ferreria noted that the District's air monitoring stations located in Corcoran and at Golden State Avenue in Bakersfield have recorded elevated PM10 measurements since 10 a.m. Visibilities were quickly shrinking from five miles to just 300 feet because of blowing dust, according to reports received from Bakersfield early this afternoon.

Exposure to 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 of the valley portions of Kern and Tulare counties and Kings County are advised to use caution Monday afternoon and evening. People with heart or lung diseases should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of unhealthy air quality. 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 air-quality forecast for Monday is in the moderate range (51-100) for central and northern regions of the Valley. But Ferreria noted that the forecast was being amended to climb from moderate to unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150) for the southern region areas affected by this wind event.

On Feb. 16, 2006, the Valley Air District's Governing Board approved a "Natural Events Action Plan" (NEAP) that outlines a protocol to inform the public when unusual natural events occur. The purpose of the plan is to identify and minimize public exposure to these unusual events. The full text of the NEAP is available online at [http://www.valleyair.org/Workshops/postings/2-16-06-NEAP/Natural Events Action Plan.pdf](http://www.valleyair.org/Workshops/postings/2-16-06-NEAP/Natural%20Events%20Action%20Plan.pdf)

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 <http://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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