

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

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sections

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High winds prompt health warning Air District cautions that air pollution levels climbing

High winds throughout the San Joaquin Valley have prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement through Thursday evening.

The winds are expected to affect Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties, District forecasters said.

“Strong northwesterly winds, 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.

The District’s air-monitoring stations in Corcoran and at Golden State Avenue in Bakersfield have recorded elevated PM10 measurements since 10 a.m. Visibilities were quickly shrinking from 10 miles to just 300 feet because of blowing dust, according to reports received from various parts of the San Joaquin Valley 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 Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties are advised to use caution Thursday 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 Thursday is in the moderate range (51-100) for southern, 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 central and southern region areas affected by this wind event.

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.