

News Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

>>City, features, business and
assignment editors<<

North District Contact
Anthony Presto
(209) 557-6400

Central District Contact
Janelle Schneider
(559) 230-5853

Spare the Air ends remarkable season Total Valley designations down more than 30 %

(Sept. 29) When the 2004 Spare the Air season ends tomorrow, it will mark the end of a summer with fewer days of poor air quality than last year.

This year, from June 8 through Sept. 30, just 27 Spare the Air days were designated throughout the eight-county San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District – a 34 percent decrease from the 41 Spare the Air days called Valley-wide last summer.

“Undoubtedly, some of this was due to Valley residents, including hundreds of Spare the Air partners, making some changes in their everyday lives,” said Janelle Schneider, the District’s Spare the Air employer coordinator.

Since the District’s inception more than a decade ago, there has also been a 50 percent reduction in stationary-source emissions and rules enacted to address pollution-causing activities from a variety of sources.

Spare the Air is the District’s voluntary education and action program, whereby residents are asked to modify certain practices that contribute to summertime smog on days when air-quality levels are forecast to be unhealthy or deteriorating. Spare the Air Days are called when air quality is forecast to reach unhealthy levels for the general population (over 150 on the Air Quality Index) or unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150 on the index) in adjacent counties.

Smog is formed when ozone, a colorless, odorless chemical, reacts with heat and sunlight. More than half the Valley’s smog problem is caused by vehicle use.

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The reduction in Spare the Air days was most dramatic in Madera and Merced counties, with just five Spare the Air days this year compared to 36 and 37, respectively, last year, although every county saw significant declines:

County	2004	2003
<i>Fresno</i>	11	40
<i>Kern</i>	27	41
<i>Kings</i>	10	39
<i>Madera</i>	5	36
<i>Merced</i>	5	37
<i>San Joaquin</i>	3	15
<i>Stanislaus</i>	3	15
<i>Tulare</i>	15	39

The Valley's Spare the Air program has been in place since 1996. There are about 750 participating employers, who notify their employees when a Spare the Air Day is forecast and offer incentives for air-friendly behaviors such as carpooling, ordering lunch in, offering alternative work schedules or telecommuting, or other alternatives. The District also provides, free of charge, literature and incentive items for participating Spare the Air partners.

"The Spare the Air program is a very effective way to inform and motivate people to do things just a little differently that can have a very positive impact on improving the Valley's air quality," Schneider said.

On Spare the Air Days, the District urges Valley residents to carpool or take mass transit. There are also other things people can do to help Spare the Air:

- Use an electric briquette lighter instead of lighter fluid when barbecuing;
- Link your trips (do several errands at once);
- Postpone using gas-powered lawn-care equipment;
- Use water-based, not oil-based, paints and solvents;
- Avoid unnecessary vehicle use, including watercraft and off-road vehicles.

For information on how to become a Spare the Air partner, log onto www.valleyair.org and follow the Spare the Air links. Or call Janelle Schneider at 559-230-5853 or e-mail her at Janelle.Schneider@valleyair.org