

# News Release

10-25-2004

For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley  
Air Pollution  
Control District

**TO:**

**Local News Sections**

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

Central District Media Contact - Fresno  
**Kelly Hogan Malay**  
(559) 230-6000

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

## Wood-burning restrictions begin Nov. 1 Air District reminds residents to 'Check Before You Burn'

(Fresno, CA) – San Joaquin Valley residents are reminded to check their county's air-quality status before lighting a wood-burning fireplace, insert or pellet stove this fall and winter.

Check Before You Burn, which begins its second season on Nov. 1, is designed to reduce concentrations of harmful air pollutants throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The Check Before You Burn program prohibits the use of wood-burning heating devices when and where air quality is expected to be unhealthy (an Air Quality Index of 151 or higher).

A second component of the program encourages residents to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning fireplaces, inserts and stoves, or to burn as cleanly as possible, when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for sensitive groups (an AQI between 101 and 150).

Residents should check the wood-burning status in their county before they light a fire. English and Spanish updates are available toll-free at 1-800-Smog-Info (766-4463) and at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org). Updates in Hmong are available toll-free at 1-877-344-1212. When a mandatory no-burn order is issued, it will be in effect from midnight to midnight on the affected day. The program runs through the end of February.

Wintertime residential wood burning throughout the San Joaquin Valley adds about 24 tons per day of particulates to the Valley's air. That amount is roughly four times the amount of particulates spewed in one day by all the motor vehicles traveling on Valley roads and highways.

Particulates can be inhaled deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems. Short-term exposure to particulates can aggravate existing lung conditions, such as asthma and bronchitis. Long-term exposure can increase the risk of heart attacks and lung cancer.

The San Joaquin Valley air basin fails to meet federal and state health-based standards for levels of particulates in the air.

When mandatory wood-burning restrictions are in place, Air District inspectors will perform surveillance and investigate complaints. Violations of the wood-burning prohibitions can result in fines ranging from \$50 to \$1,000, depending on the severity of the violation and any extenuating circumstances. To report violations, residents may call the Air District 24 hours a day at:

- 1-800-281-7003 in San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties.
- 1-800-870-1037 in Madera, Fresno and Kings counties.
- 1-800-926-5550 in Tulare and the valley portion of Kern counties.

Last season, wood burning was prohibited twice throughout the Valley – one day in Fresno County and one day in both Fresno and the valley portion of Kern counties. About 60 educational flyers were mailed to residents reported to have violated the no-burn orders. None of the Fresno residents reported to have violated the first ban were reported to have violated the second ban.

While most residences and businesses -- including lodges and restaurants – are subject to the mandatory prohibitions, the following are exempt:

- Gas and propane devices or wood-burning cooking stoves.
- Homes in which wood burning is the sole source (no other heating device is built into the home)
- Devices in homes above 3,000 feet in elevation.
- Devices in homes where natural gas service is not available.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern. For assistance, contact the nearest District office in Modesto at (209) 557-6440, Fresno (559) 230-6000 or Bakersfield (661) 326-6900.

###