

News Release

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For Immediate Release

TO:

Local news, business, ag and assignment editors



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Air basin closes in on federal particulate standard

Air District issues a call to action to builders, farmers, and the public

(Fresno, CA) – For the first time since the passage of the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments, the San Joaquin Valley air basin is close to meeting the federal standard for airborne particulate matter that is 10 microns and smaller, or PM10.

In order to meet the standard, the Valley Air District must provide three years of data showing that PM10 concentrations didn't exceed 24-hour and annual caps. If PM10 concentrations remain low through the rest of 2005, the air basin will have met those requirements.

"This is a significant achievement for the San Joaquin Valley," said Seyed Sadredin, deputy director of the Valley Air District. "The improvements are proof positive that the Air District's control programs are working. Moreover, the air basin is reaping the benefits of the resolute and courageous actions of the District's governing board, substantial investment by Valley businesses, and the general public's participation and cooperation."

Sadredin cautions, however, that the Valley is just starting to enter the second half of this year's PM10 season. Particulates are a problem mostly during the fall and winter months.

Farmers, builders and public urged to continue helping

PM10 is a grab bag of pollutants including soot, tiny droplets of liquid and chemicals, fly ash and dust, that can bypass the body's natural defenses and lodge deep in the lungs. Exposure to PM10 can trigger heart attacks, increase risk for lung cancer, aggravate conditions such as asthma and bronchitis, and reduce lung function.

"We're issuing a call to action: let's collectively put the Valley in an optimal position to finish this three-year period with no PM10 exceedances," Sadredin said.

Farmers, builders and the general public can help keep PM10 levels low by complying with both mandatory and voluntary emission-reduction programs. For example:

- More than 6,000 of the Valley's larger farms have been reducing dust emissions since July 2004 by implementing Conservation Management Practices (CMP) plans. Growers and producers select from an Air District-provided list of practices that help reduce the amount of "fugitive" particles that come from vehicles moving over field and roads, soil disturbance, wind erosion,

open piles, and so on. The CMPs are estimated to reduce Valley-wide particulate emissions by 34 tons per day.

- Also, builders, contractors, farmers and anyone involved with earth-moving processes, demolition and construction, bulk material handling and storage, and facilities with unpaved traffic areas and other common sources of fugitive dust are required to control emissions under the Air District's Regulation VIII. The regulation is estimated to eliminate nearly 19 tons per day of particulate emissions.
- Members of the public also are urged to comply with the Air District's wood-burning curtailment program that runs Nov. 1 through Feb. 28. During those months, burning solid fuels such as wood and pellets is prohibited when and where air quality is expected to be unhealthy for the general public. Residents are asked to voluntarily refrain from burning solid fuels when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for sensitive groups, such as children, the elderly and anyone with a respiratory condition. Certain exemptions apply. Residents can get their county's wood-burning status online at www.valleyair.org or by calling 1-800-Smog-Info (744-4463.)
- Other types of permitted burning, such as agricultural, hazard-reduction and prescribed burning, are strictly regulated by the Air District and are allowed only when the air quality can tolerate the increased emissions. Backyard burning or burning trash and debris are prohibited altogether and violations can result in fines.

PM10 improved over the years

Monitoring stations in the Valley recorded exceedances of the federal daily PM10 limit on more than 55 days in 1990. An exceedance is logged when PM10 concentrations are higher than the limit. The number of Valley-wide exceedances had dropped to 12 days by 2001 and just under eight days in 2002. No exceedances have been recorded since 2002.

Sadredin points out that meeting the federal PM10 standard won't mean regulations can be relaxed or that public and industry efforts are no longer needed.

"While it's gratifying to see dividends from our efforts to date, the hard work is not over," Sadredin said. "In light of a growing population, the air basin will continually need to control emissions to keep particulate levels low. The work also must continue to meet new, more demanding air-quality standards for both ozone and particulates."

The Valley Air District serves San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the valley portion of Kern counties. For more information, log onto www.valleyair.org or call the nearest District office: in Modesto at (209) 557-6400; in Fresno at (559) 230-6000; and in Bakersfield at (661) 326-6900.

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