

Air quality alert remains in effect throughout the week

By San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
Porterville Recorder Online, Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Smoke from the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County (and potentially other wildfires in the state) and blowing dust from forecasted gusty winds this week will continue to affect air quality throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Local air pollution officials want to remind Valley residents a health caution remains in place and they should take action to limit their exposure to smoke and dust.

Smoke from the Kincade Fire is expected to impact the northern region of the Valley later today, and could impact the central and southern regions soon after. Smoke impacts are expected to continue until the fire is extinguished, while blowing dust should subside by Thursday. Anyone being exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move indoors to an air-conditioned/filtered environment with their windows closed.

Wildfire smoke and wind-blown dust can create unhealthy concentrations of PM2.5 (particulate matter 2.5 microns and smaller) and PM10 (particulate matter 10 microns and smaller). Both pollutants can trigger asthma attacks, and exacerbate other respiratory diseases, while PM2.5 can also increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

People with heart or lung disease in impacted areas should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate matter exposure. In addition, sensitive individuals, such as those with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to the health effects from these pollutants.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality in the Valley by visiting myRAAN.com. The RAAN monitors are designed to detect the microscopic PM2.5 particles that exist in smoke. However, larger particles, such as ash and dust, may not be detected. If an area is covered in ash or dust, air quality should be considered "unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if the monitor reflects a lower reading.

The public can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they're impacting the Valley. Residents can also follow air quality conditions by downloading the free "Valley Air" app, available in the Apple store or Google Play.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-392-5500).

Is Rain Coming to Clean Up Valley's Dusty, Smoky Air?

GV Wire, Tuesday, October 29, 2019

With an air quality alert in effect this week, the central San Joaquin Valley could use a good soaking.

Unfortunately, the earliest possibility of rain for the Fresno area, according to Accuweather, isn't until Saturday, Nov. 9.

And even then, the odds aren't very good with just an 11% chance of precipitation.

The forecasters at The Weather Channel offer a little more hope. They predict a 10% chance on Sunday, Nov. 10, and 30% on Monday, Nov. 11.

Limit Your Exposure to Smoke and Dust

Meanwhile, the Valley Air District reminds residents that they should limit their exposure to smoke and dust.

Smoke from the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County and dust from gusty winds continue to hurt the Valley's air quality.

Anyone exposed to poor air quality or wildfire smoke should move indoors and keep their windows closed.

How to Track Air Quality

Residents can use the district's Real-time Air Advisory Network to track the air quality at myRAAN.com. However, the air district advises that the RAAN monitors detect the small particles in smoke but not the larger particles often found in dust and smoke.

"If an area is covered in ash or dust, (the) air quality should be considered unhealthy even if the monitor reflects a lower reading" than RAAN Level 4 or higher, the district said in a news release Monday. Residents also can access air quality conditions by downloading the free Valley Air app at the Apple Store or Google Play.

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Wildfire smoke and windblown dust deliver a bad air double whammy to the valley

The Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, October 29, 2019

Wildfires and shifting winds are delivering a perfect storm of bad air quality to the Southern San Joaquin Valley, and the conditions are expected to last through most of this week.

So that haze you may have noticed hanging in the air Sunday? Expect more of it.

"We caution the public to use your senses. Use your eyes and nose. If you see or smell smoke or dust, it's having an impact on you," said Heather Heinks, a spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

That means sensitive groups with breathing problems should take precaution and even healthy individuals should avoid prolonged outdoor activity. It may also be a good idea to change the filter in your air conditioning system, Heinks said.

Over the weekend, a low pressure system moved into the valley causing severe winds in the north near Sacramento. That mixed dust into the air which then made its way down the valley and resulted in the cloudy haze on Sunday. As of Monday morning, the air was clearer but wildfires burning to the north and south of Kern County caused more smoke impacts, and more wind is expected mid-week, which could again create a dusty haze, Heinks said.

Despite the visibly bad air, local air quality monitors have not registered high readings for pollutants as one might expect. That's because the monitors look for tiny, microscopic bits of soot and chemicals, known as PM 2.5, whereas smoke and dust particles are larger, known as PM 10. There are monitors in the valley for PM 10 but the real-time readings are not available to the public like monitors for PM 2.5 and smog, Heinks said.

\$6M in grant money to replace outdated diesel engines

By The Business Journal Staff

The Business Journal, Monday, October 28, 2019

A Central Valley clean-air agency received the lion's share of grant money from the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce diesel emissions in its district.

Of the \$11.67 million the USEPA awarded to organizations throughout the Golden State, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District based in Fresno received three grants totaling \$6.96 million, according to a press release from the EPA.

That amount, combined with \$21.51 million from the state agency will go toward replacing 103 ag tractors, three locomotives and 17 trucks.

"By promoting clean diesel technologies, we can improve air quality and human health, advance American innovation and support green jobs," said EPA Pacific Southwest Regional Administrator Mike Stoker. "Reducing exposure to diesel pollution is important for everyone, particularly children, one of our most sensitive populations."

The EPA standards set in the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act that make diesel engines 90% cleaner do not always apply to tractors, autos, trains and more that predate the act. Grant money goes toward replacing or retrofitting many of those engines.

Between 2008 and 2016, the EPA has given \$629 million nationally to retrofit or replace 67,300 engines and equipment, the release stated. This has saved 454 million gallons of fuel and reduced 15,490 tons of particulate matter.

Other agencies given grant money include:

—Blue Lake Rancheria received \$78,562 to replace one wildland fire engine. The funds will be combined with \$311,427 from Blue Lake Rancheria and the Volkswagen Mitigation Settlement.

—California Air Resources Board (CARB) received \$556,361 to replace five diesel school buses with electric, zero-emission buses. The funds will be combined with \$505,457 from CARB and \$1,182,500 in fleet cost-share funds.

—City of Long Beach Harbor Department received \$1,500,000 to replace three port cranes. The funds will be combined with \$5,100,000 from Total Terminals International LLC.

—Morongo Band of Mission Indians received \$283,841 to replace two school buses and two backhoes. These funds will be combined with \$283,842 from the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.

—South Coast Air Quality Management District received \$2,289,581 to replace 35 municipal trucks. These funds will be combined with \$1,575,000 from CARB and \$2,625,595 from fleet cost-share.

Air officials issue dual cautions: dust and smoke

The Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, October 26, 2019

If you've been smelling smoke in the morning, you're not crazy.

It means you've been breathing smoke.

And now you may need to add unhealthy levels of dust to the valley's respiratory recipe.

According to two news releases from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, potential for blowing dust as a result of gusty winds — and smoke from the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County — have

prompted local air pollution officials to issue not one, but two health cautionary statements for the San Joaquin Valley.

The northern and western parts of the valley are likely to see the most impacts from the winds beginning Saturday night and continuing through Sunday, according to air officials. The strong winds will likely cause localized areas of blowing dust where soils are exceptionally dry — creating unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, known as PM10.

To complicate the problem, impacts from the smoke, officials warn, are likely to continue until the fire is extinguished, and may be more noticeable during the night and early morning hours.

Smoke from wildfires, along with dust picked up by strong winds, produce particulate matter, which can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure.

Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call the Bakersfield office at 392-5500.

MONEY MATTERS: With more range and lower prices, electric cars more accessible than ever

By Rudy Valdivia

The Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, October 26, 2019

A 2003 episode of "The Simpsons" featured a fictional Epcot ride called the "Electric Car of the Future." The car could speak, proclaiming in a pained voice, "I can't go very fast or very far."

Well, the future has arrived, and today's electric cars have a range equal to combustion-engine vehicles and they can go very fast.

The first Tesla model, the Roadster, was released in 2008 and cost \$109,000 (that is \$129,885.89 for us inflation nerds). The Roadster had a 245-mile range.

In the past 11 years, the cost has come down and the range has increased to match its combustion-engine cousins.

Then there are the incentives.

Federal income tax credit up to \$7,500. This credit begins to phase out once the manufacturer sells 200,000 vehicles.

State rebate up to \$7,000. This credit is based on the buyer's income as well as available cap-and-trade funds.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District rebate of \$3,000.

Pacific Gas & Electric offers a rebate of \$800, along with a special rate plan for customers with vehicle chargers in their homes. This plan features three tiers of rates to encourage charging and other electricity use during off-peak hours. These PG&E off-peak hours will increase significantly on Nov. 1, so the 3 a.m. laundry loads can soon move to a more convenient hour.

The installation of a charger costs about \$1,000 at the high end. I categorize electrical work with dentistry — best left to the professionals.

A conversation with an electric car owner can be an interesting undertaking. Tesla owners, in particular, are an interesting group whose enthusiasm can be either contagious or mildly disturbing. With message boards devoted entirely to Tesla car naming, the internet is the natural home for the truly Tesla-obsessed. YouTube channels for Tesla owners are so lucrative that Rich Benoit quit his IT job to focus on his "Rich Rebuilds" YouTube channel. His channel has nearly 500,000 subscribers.

When the electric car fans gush about their freedom from the gas pumps, the most frequent question is the electricity costs. I asked a Tesla owner about his electric bills and other costs. My friend Jeff has owned his Tesla for about a year.

Miles driven in the first year were about 16,000. The car has a range of about 320 miles. Nearly all of the charging was done at home and free chargers were used when possible. Paso Robles is a garden of free chargers at the wineries. The free chargers run at the same rate as home chargers – in other words, slowly. But a free charger can add about 30 miles to the battery in an hour so you can make it home without a trip to the Supercharger.

At home, electricity costs increased roughly \$300 compared to the prior year. So those 16,000 miles cost a bit less than two cents per mile.

Jeff made a trip to Phoenix in the Tesla. This longer trip required visits along the way to Superchargers in Indio and in Quartzsite, Arizona. The Tesla Superchargers are fast but they are not free. A full charge at a Supercharger costs less than \$10 and takes less than 30 minutes. That is about three cents per mile in fuel cost.

I know you have pulled out your calculator now, so let's confirm your calculation of the cost of gasoline. At 35 miles to the gallon and a price of \$4 per gallon, fuel costs are a little more than 11 cents per mile.