

Dust kicks up near Fresno, bringing dirty air and causing a vehicle crash, CHP says

By Theddeus Miller

Fresno Bee, Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019

Gusty winds in the Central San Joaquin Valley prompted a health warning Monday and may have added to poor visibility in a Highway 41 pile-up near Fresno.

The National Weather Service in Hanford issued a wind advisory for much of the day Monday as the gusts precede a storm later in the week. The wind also has the potential to further dirty the Valley's poor air quality, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Along with concerns over air quality, the gusty winds kicked up dust along Highway 41 near Floral Avenue near Caruthers, according to the California Highway Patrol.

The dust played a part in a multi-car crash around 1 p.m. when seven cars collided in three separate crashes, CHP said. "All resulted from dust and unsafe speed," Officer Mike Salas said.

Five people were taken to a Fresno-area hospital but all the injuries were described as minor, according to CHP.

In the event of blowing dust, CHP recommends drivers treat the conditions like fog, which mean drivers should slow down or pull over, if necessary.

The state Department of Transportation's District 6 also tweeted a warning. "Be advised that highways around the Central Valley are experiencing various degrees of reduced visibility due to high winds and dust," Monday's tweet read. "Please exercise caution on the roadways and allot extra time to arrive at your destination."

Poor air quality

The district issued a health caution for San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern County.

"A low pressure system is dropping southward along the east side of the Sierra Nevada today and will generate strong northwesterly winds across the San Joaquin Valley, especially the northern and western portions of the Valley," the statement said.

"The windy conditions will cause localized blowing dust in areas where soils are exceptionally dry, and create unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller."

Exposure to particulate pollution can cause serious health problems, aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and bronchitis, and increase risk of respiratory infections, the district said.

People with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, the district said.

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

Air pollution officials issue health cautionary statement through Monday night

By Kyra Haas

Visalia Times-Delta, Monday, November 25, 2019

Strong winds Monday may kick up harmful dust across the Valley, according to air quality pollution officials.

Because of the potential for blowing dust, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District issued a health cautionary statement through Monday evening for Tulare County, as well as San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings and the Valley portion of Kern County.

The dust can cause unhealthy levels of particulate pollution where soils are dry and can "aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and bronchitis and increase risk of respiratory infections," according to the district.

The northwesterly winds are expected to especially affect the northern and western parts of the Valley, officials said. The gusty conditions are part of a low-pressure system moving south on the east side of the Sierra Nevada.

Depending on local conditions, the district encourages older adults and children to avoid prolonged exposure.

Air quality should be less of a concern tomorrow and the rest of this week, as several rain showers are projected to move in starting Tuesday, Valley Air District spokeswoman Cassandra Melching said.

"Tomorrow we will have a shift in weather with rain in the evening, which is very welcoming considering we need the rain to help keep the loose top soil down," Melching said.

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.

Pre-Thanksgiving storm should clear dust from Modesto area, bring snow to Sierra

By John Holland

Modesto Bee, Monday, November 25, 2019

The Modesto area's autumn dry spell is expected to end Tuesday with a storm that also could complicate Thanksgiving travel.

The rain would be the first since 0.07 inches fell on the city Sept. 16, according to the Modesto Irrigation District. That is all it has recorded in the weather year that started July 1.

We're not back in drought, thanks to reservoir storage from recent wet years, but the rainless stretch has extended wildfire season past its usual end in October.

Monday brought strong winds that stirred up dust in the region. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said it could be a concern for people with heart or lung conditions through Monday evening.

The National Weather Service forecasts an 80 percent chance of rain in Modesto on Tuesday evening, starting at about 5 p.m. The moisture could total an inch that day and Wednesday. The chance of rain Thursday is 30 percent.

People traveling in the Sierra Nevada should prepare for low-elevation snow Tuesday night into Friday. The Weather Service projects 2 to 3 feet at Sonora Pass, the summit of Highway 108.

Some ski resorts have opened in the Lake Tahoe area thanks to snow-making equipment. Dodge Ridge, off 108 near Pinecrest, is still waiting for enough of the natural stuff before opening.

This fall has been roughly similar to 2018, when storms did not start until late November. The weather year ended up well above average.

As of Sunday, storage was 121 percent of average in Don Pedro Reservoir. It stores Tuolumne River water for MID and the Turlock Irrigation District.