

## **Central Valley posts 'cleanest' Check Before You Burn season**

The Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Despite record-breaking high winds at the beginning of the Check Before You Burn season, it was recorded as the cleanest season in the program's 17-year history, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

During the 2019-2020 season, there were only 15 days in the Central Valley in which the air was over the federal 24-hour standard for the daily average particulate matter, which is 35ug PM2.5, according to valley air pollution control district's data team. This is significantly lower compared to 2018-2019, when there were 35 days over the federal standard, and 2017-2018, when there 55 days were over the standard.

"We go through a complete vetting process for all of our data, so these numbers are preliminary until we present our formal report to the board about the winter season, most likely at our April board meeting," said Heather Heinks, outreach and communications manager for the valley air pollution control district.

In Kern County this season, there were 88 days designated as "no burning unless registered," which is exactly twice as many as there were in 2018-2019. There were also 10 days designated as "no burning for all," four more than there were in the prior season.

There were a total of 78 notices of violation issued in Kern County throughout the 2019-2020 season, 20 more than the year prior.

"Once again, the district thanks residents, businesses, the ag industry and all other Valley stakeholders for helping to achieve our cleanest winter on record," Samir Sheikh, air pollution control officer and Valley Air District executive director, said in a news release.

The three declaration levels are "No Burning for All," "No Burning Unless Registered" and "Burning Discouraged," according to the air pollution control district.

In 2019, the district adopted amendments to lower the "No Burning Unless Registered" and "No Burning for All" thresholds in the three hot spot counties with the biggest air pollution challenges: Madera, Fresno and Kern. Officials said the more stringent policies contributed to improved air quality.

Implemented 17 years ago, the Check Before You Burn program intends to keep air quality in the Central Valley under control by limiting smoke caused by fires, particularly wood fires. Those fires release particulate matter that is kept near ground level where it can be a hazard to public health and aggravate heart and lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, the district said in its news release.

While no formal burning restrictions are in place from now until the end of October, the district discourages all residential wood burning.