

With more people staying home, Valley skies are cleaner

By Justin Sacher

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FRESNO, Calif. (KGPE) – Early data from Valley air pollution sensors appear to show just what kind of impact staying at home is having on the air we breathe.

The California Air Resources Board keeps air pollution sensor data from air quality observation stations up and down the state.

It is a resource meteorologists and other scientists will use to examine the different changes in air quality due to measures like social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

Although air quality has been noticeably nice lately, this is already one of the clearest times of year because of seasonal weather patterns.

Heather Heinks at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District says, “It’s a little early to completely give credit to shelter-in-place but there’s some basic science and basic common sense that tells you reducing vehicle miles traveled and getting people off the road translates into a reduction in pollution.”

Heinks’ work at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has long involved advocating for people to choose to drive less because of the difference it can make in Valley air quality.

During this pandemic she says, “We can see that data telling a little bit of a story. It’s not distinct or overwhelming yet.”

Right now many different air pollution factors besides driving habits are changing, making it something scientists will study for quite a long time.

“Our partners at the county level and agencies that study traffic studies and count cars and get a sense of the change of vehicle miles traveled and there’s yes a lot of data to look at. And it’s nice to have some supporting numbers to the effort that we’ve been pushing forward for a couple decades now.”