

For immediate release 09/20/16

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Wildfires in Monterey and Santa Barbara counties are threatening public health in the Valley

The public may experience poor air quality and should take action to protect their health

Smoke from the Soberanes Fire in Monterey County and the Canyon Fire burning in Santa Barbara County are affecting air quality in locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Unusually high particulate matter levels throughout the Valley are prompting Air District officials to issue a health cautionary statement Valley-wide.

Air officials are expecting poor air quality conditions to continue through Wednesday, September 21 based on the projected weather conditions. While a low pressure system approaching should reduce smoke impacts by Thursday, the public should exercise caution until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from wildfires produces particulate matter (PM) and contributes to the creation of ozone, which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air District officials urge residents to follow their doctors' orders when exposed to wildfire emissions and stay indoors if at all possible.

Please be advised that the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) monitors are designed to detect the fine particulates (called PM 2.5 which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in wildfire smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing impacts from these wildfires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can see or smell smoke or ash, that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" and remain indoors.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

For more information about the Valley Air District, call a regional office: in Fresno, 559-230-6000; in Bakersfield, 661-392-5500; and in Modesto, 209-557-6400.