

For immediate release 08-17-2020

Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

Media Contact:

Heather Heinks (559) 230-5898

Spanish language:

Maricela Velasquez (559) 230-5849

Wildfires bring smoke into the Valley *District cautions Valley residents of increasing health impacts*

Multiple wildfires surrounding the Valley are causing smoke impacts to all counties of the Valley air basin. As a result, the District is issuing a health caution, which will remain in place until the fires are extinguished.

The Canyon Fire, located in Stanislaus County near Turlock; the Hills Fire, located in Fresno County west of Avenal near Highway 33; and the Lake Fire located in Los Angeles County southeast of Lebec are producing smoke that is infiltrating into the San Joaquin Valley which includes San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare Counties, and the valley portion of Kern county. Air pollution officials caution Valley residents to reduce exposure to the particulate matter (PM) emissions by remaining indoors in effected areas.

PM pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Individuals with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of PM exposure. Those with existing respiratory conditions, including COVID-19, young children and the elderly, are especially susceptible to the health effects from this form of pollution. Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move indoors, to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with windows closed. The common cloth and paper masks individuals are wearing due to COVID-19 concerns may not protect them from wildfire smoke.

Residents can use the District's Real-time Air Advisory Network (RAAN) to track air quality at any Valley location by visiting myRAAN.com. District air monitoring stations are designed to detect microscopic PM 2.5 particles that exist in smoke. However, larger particles, such as ash, may not be detected. If you smell smoke or see falling ash in your immediate vicinity, consider air quality "unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) even if RAAN displays lower level of pollution.

The public can also check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current and recently past wildfires affecting the Valley. In addition, anyone can follow air quality conditions by downloading the free "Valley Air" app on their mobile device.

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). District Outreach and Communications personnel are also available for media interviews via Zoom or by phone.