

# AIR QUALITY IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY



Despite years of air-quality improvements and recently reaching two clean-air milestones, the San Joaquin Valley air basin still faces serious air-quality problems on too many days, due primarily to two pollutants. Ozone, the main ingredient of smog, is mostly a problem during hot, summer months when various chemicals cook in sunlight and heat to form the pollutant. Particulate matter, on the other hand, is mostly a concern during fall and winter months, when emissions increase and strong inversion layers prevent the particles from dispersing.

Particulate matter is a harmful mix of soot, chemicals, dust, salts, dirt, metals, smoke, and toxins. These microscopic particles are dangerous:



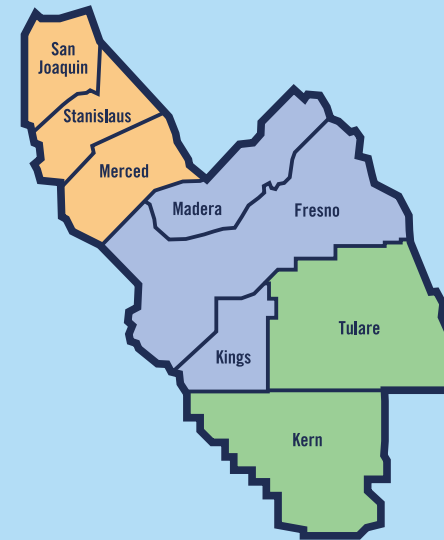
they can bypass the body's natural defenses, lodge deep in the lungs, and even pass into the bloodstream. Exposure to strong concentrations of particulates can increase lung cancer risk, trigger heart attacks in people with heart disease, aggravate conditions such as asthma and bronchitis, and reduce lung function.

On winter days when inversion layers are strong and air pollution levels are high, wood smoke from residential fireplace burning can create up to a third of the coarse-particle pollution in urban areas. The Valley Air District in 2003 amended its residential wood-burning rule to further reduce wintertime particulate



emissions by nearly five tons per day Valley-wide. Since then, wintertime air quality has gotten better, but there's still room for improvement. See inside for information about the wood-burning rule, how to comply, and how to help improve the Valley's wintertime air quality.

Contact the Air District for  
the daily air-quality forecast  
and wood-burning status:  
1-800 SMOG INFO / 1-800-766-4463  
[www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org)



**Northern Region**  
*Serving San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties*  
4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto, CA 95356-8718  
Tel: 209-557-6400 Fax: 209-557-6475

**Central Region (Main Office)**  
*Serving Madera, Fresno and Kings counties*  
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, CA 93726-0244  
Tel: 559-230-6000 Fax: 559-230-6061

**Southern Region**  
*Serving Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties*  
2700 M Street, Suite 275, Bakersfield, CA 93301-2373  
Tel: 661-326-6900 Fax: 661-326-6985

 **San Joaquin Valley**  
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT  
Please visit our website at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org)

# CHECK BEFORE YOU BURN

 **San Joaquin Valley**  
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

Information for Residents, Real Estate Agents,  
Builders & Developers about the  
**AIR DISTRICT'S FIREPLACE RULE**

November through February, please  
**CHECK BEFORE YOU BURN**



From November through February, the Check Before You Burn program prohibits the use of fireplaces and woodstoves that burn wood, pellets, or manufactured logs when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for the general public. Residents also are asked to voluntarily postpone using fireplaces – or to burn as cleanly as possible – when air quality is expected to be unhealthy for sensitive groups.

**EXEMPTIONS.** Although the mandatory curtailments affect most residences and businesses, they don't apply to:

- Devices that use natural gas or propane exclusively;
- Cooking devices;
- Homes and businesses in areas that don't have natural gas service;
- Homes and businesses in areas 3,000 feet or higher in elevation;
- Homes in which burning wood is the sole source of heat; Contact the Air District (see back panel) to determine whether this exemption applies.

The daily status is available online at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org), by phone at **1-800 SMOG INFO / 1-800-766-4463** and through the local news media.

Check Before You Burn applies to fireplaces and woodstoves that burn wood, pellets, or manufactured logs. The daily wood-burning status is determined on a county-wide basis and is in effect from midnight to midnight. There are three stages:

**UNHEALTHY AIR =  
Wood Burning Prohibited**



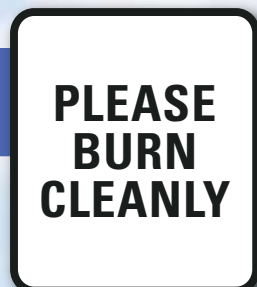
Wood burning is prohibited when the Air Quality Index is forecast to exceed 150. The rule prohibits burning any solid fuel, including wood, manufactured logs, and pellets, on the affected day. Violations can result in fines.

**AIR UNHEALTHY FOR  
SENSITIVE GROUPS =  
Wood Burning Discouraged**



Wood burning is discouraged on a voluntary basis when the Air Quality Index is forecast between 101 and 150. The public is asked to voluntarily refrain from using wood-burning devices unless they are stoves or inserts manufactured to meet the EPA's July 1990 emissions standards, are pellet-fueled, or burn manufactured logs.

**GOOD or MODERATE AIR =  
Burn Cleanly**



Residents are urged to burn as cleanly as possible when the Air Quality Index is forecast to be 100 or lower, meaning air quality is good or moderate.



## A MESSAGE TO RESIDENTS

### Cleaner-burning tips

When mandatory curtailments aren't in place, residents can do their part to improve air quality by burning cleaner.

- Replace older wood inserts and stoves with cleaner devices that meet the EPA's July 1990 emissions standards, that are pellet-fueled, or that use natural gas or propane exclusively.
- Ensure firewood is clean, dry and seasoned. Burn denser woods such as oak, which burns slower and more evenly.
- Give the fire adequate oxygen. Starving the fire of air will cause it to smolder and create excess emissions.
- Keep fireplaces and wood stoves properly maintained. Ensure the chimney is cleaned and inspected periodically.

### Burning trash is never allowed

Burning trash, newspapers, wrapping paper, plastics, and other items not designed for burning in a fireplace is a violation of Air District rules and can result in fines. Burning trash also can create hazardous emissions.

### To report violations, call:

In San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced counties: 1-800-281-7003  
 In Madera, Fresno, and Kings counties: 1-800-870-1037  
 In Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties: 1-800-926-5550  
 Violations of mandatory curtailments can result in fines.

## REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

### Selling a home?

Air pollution rules require that older, dirtier wood stoves and inserts must be removed from a home and destroyed before the home is sold or ownership is transferred. Devices that can be left in homes upon sale or transfer include: open-hearth and zero-clearance fireplaces; stoves and inserts manufactured to meet the EPA's July 1990 emissions standards; pellet stoves and inserts; and devices fueled exclusively by natural gas or propane.

**There are no exemptions to this requirement and it applies to all areas within the jurisdiction of the Valley Air District.**

A home seller whose property includes a wood-burning insert or stove must submit to the Air District and to the home buyer a Statement of Compliance, available at [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org) or at the nearest District office (see back panel). A home seller who would like to keep an old stove for its decorative value should contact the District for guidance on how to permanently disable the device.

## BUILDERS & DEVELOPERS

### New homes and developments

Air pollution rules limit the number of solid-fuel burning devices allowed in new homes and developments. Contact the Air District (see back panel) for more information and to learn what limits apply to your project. County and city ordinances and rules also may apply.



## SALE OF WOOD-BURNING DEVICES

It is illegal to sell, advertise for sale, transfer, or install a solid-fuel burning stove or insert that

does not meet the EPA's July 1990 emissions standards and is not a pellet-fueled heater, unless it has been permanently disabled. Violations can result in fines.