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Attn: Local news, weather, health and assignment editors

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Influx of smoke from the Garza Fire and other wildfires is affecting all of the San Joaquin Valley

Smoke from the Whittier (Santa Barbara County), Alamo (San Luis Obispo County), and Garza (Kings County) fires is affecting air quality in all locations throughout the San Joaquin Valley, from San Joaquin County to the Valley portion of Kern County. Smoke from the Schaeffer Fire located in Tulare County is affecting air quality in the foothill and mountain areas of Tulare and Kern County, especially the communities of Kennedy Meadows and Johnsondale.

The strong high pressure system parked over the Valley is causing smoke emissions to remain trapped within the air basin and spikes in particulate matter levels and ozone levels are possible. The health caution will remain in place and smoke impacts will continue until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from fires produces particulate matter (PM2.5), 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 PM 2.5 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 PM2.5 which are microscopic in size and not visible to the human eye) that exist in smoke. Ash particles are much larger in size and will not be detected by our monitors. Therefore an area may be experiencing ash impacts from potential fires while the PM monitor reflects a moderate reading. If you can smell smoke or see ash that is an indication that you should be treating air quality conditions as "Unhealthy" (RAAN Level 4 or higher) 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 check the nearest RAAN monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions at www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

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).