



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 10, 2009

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SMOKE AND ASH IMPACTING SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA, – The San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Air Pollution Control District and Health Department informs individuals that the air quality in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County is being impacted by smoke and falling ash from the La Brea Fire in northern Santa Barbara County. Skies are hazy and fine particulate (PM2.5) concentrations are higher than normal due to transported smoke from the fire.

If you smell smoke or see ash fall, the County officials recommend that you take precautions to reduce the harmful health effects by limiting outdoor activities. These precautions are especially important for people with respiratory and heart conditions.

Residents are encouraged to use common sense and take precautions to reduce the harmful health effects associated with smoke exposure. When it is obvious that there is smoke in the air, County officials recommend that individuals avoid strenuous outdoor activity and remain indoors as much as possible. Levels of particulates in the smoke may be high enough that the potential exists for even healthy people to be affected. If a cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, exhaustion, light-headedness or chest pain occurs, outdoor activity should be stopped and the affected person should seek medical attention.

To clean ash, try to use a damp cloth, spray areas lightly with water, and direct ash-filled water to ground areas, and away from the runoff system. Take your car to the car wash. Wash off toys that have been outside in the ash. Clean ash off pets. Due to the corrosive nature of ash, avoid any skin contact with the ash (wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts). If you have heart or lung problems, try not to do any ash cleanup or do anything that stirs the particles back up into the air. Do not allow kids to play in the ash. Do not use leaf blowers!

Until the wildfire is put out, smoke and ash will intermittently be present in our county's air for what may be days to come. Due to changing winds and weather conditions, it is difficult to predict which areas of the county may be most affected by smoke and ash from the fire.

The County officials will continue to closely monitor smoke impacts and air quality in San Luis Obispo County. By following the air quality index (AQI) the general public can also monitor real-time air quality throughout SLO County. The AQI focuses on health effects individuals may experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air. The AQI is available to the public via the APCD website www.slocleanair.org, email, pager messages and text messages. Sign up to receive the daily air quality forecast via email, page or text message by subscribing online at www.enviroflash.info/

The La Brea Fire, located 26 miles east of Santa Maria in the San Rafael Wilderness, started on August 8 at 2:50 pm. As of August 10 at 6 am, the fire had burned 10,500 acres.

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