



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 15, 2017**

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**SMOKE IMPACTING SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

**SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA,** – The San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Air Pollution Control District and Public Health Department are working in partnership to assess the air quality, to identify any potential health impacts and to inform the community about safeguarding individual health. At this time, San Luis Obispo County is being impacted by smoke from wildfires in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. For comparison of the last 3 – 24-hour periods, we have provided the chart below which demonstrates the air quality for several locations.

CITY	DATE		
	12/12/2017	12/13/2017	12/14/2017
King City	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Atascadero	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
SLO	GOOD	GOOD	GOOD
Nipomo	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
Santa Maria	MODERATE	GOOD	GOOD
Goleta	Not Available	UNHEALTHY	UNHEALTHY for SENSITIVE GROUPS
Santa Barbara	UNHEALTHY	UNHEALTHY	UNHEALTHY
Ojai	VERY UNHEALTHY	UNHEALTHY	UNHEALTHY

Expect skies to be hazy and fine particulate (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentrations to be higher than normal. Air quality is ranging from good to moderate with intermittent levels of Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. Changing winds make it difficult to predict which areas of the county may be most affected. However, until the fires are put out, smoke will likely be intermittently present in our region. **Fire protection agencies are expecting fires in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties to be very active this weekend. Smoke forecast models indicate SLO County will be impacted by smoke this weekend, especially on Sunday.**

**If you smell smoke or see ash fall:**

Air District officials recommend that if you smell smoke or see ash, take precautions and use common sense to reduce your exposure to smoke. All adults and children should:

- Avoid strenuous outdoor activity
- Remain indoors as much as possible
- Close all windows and doors that lead outside to prevent bringing additional smoke inside
- Set any heating/air conditioning/ventilation systems to recirculate



## Air Pollution Control District San Luis Obispo County

These precautions are especially important for sensitive groups, including children, older adults, and people with existing respiratory illness and heart conditions, as they are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of poor air quality. Families with small children should be aware that even if adults in the household have no symptoms, children may experience symptoms due to their smaller body mass and developing lungs. If smoke increases, healthy people could be affected as well. If you experience a cough, shortness of breath, wheezing, exhaustion, light-headedness or chest pain, stop any outdoor activity immediately and seek medical attention. More information can be found at [slocleanair.org/air-quality/wildfire](http://slocleanair.org/air-quality/wildfire).

**It is recommended that you avoid ash clean-up on cars and other materials until conditions improve. If you have to clean up ash, the following is recommended:**

Use a damp cloth and spray areas lightly with water, take your vehicle 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); **and do not use leaf blowers**. Please note, if you have existing heart or lung conditions, avoid doing ash clean-up yourself or anything else that stirs the particles back up into the air. In addition, do not allow children to play in the ash.

**Regarding N95 masks:**

The use of N95 masks (also known as respirators) as protection from smoke is only recommended by public health experts when air quality conditions reach an unhealthy level. The Public Health Department is closely monitoring the situation with APCD (hourly) and is prepared to distribute N95 masks if a health risk develops.

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is distributing masks because the air quality in their county has been affected much more significantly and directly by the smoke and fires.

People with certain serious underlying health conditions who are very sensitive to air quality may wish to talk with their doctor about whether an N95 would be of benefit, as the mask can reduce air flow. N95 masks provide the most protection only when fitted properly, based on use of a fit-test machine. Also, these masks are designed for adults, though may fit a child if their face is comparable in size to that of a petite adult.

**Don't Light Tonight Advisory**

The SLO County APCD has also issued a voluntary "Don't Light Tonight" advisory through December 18, 2017, asking residents to refrain from burning wood or using their wood stoves or fireplaces unless they are being used as a primary source of heat. Weather conditions and elevated use of fireplaces and wood stoves will only further exacerbate the levels of fine particulate matter in the air.

**For updates:**

APCD and 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 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 current and forecasted AQI is available via the APCD website: [slocleanair.org](http://slocleanair.org) and you can also follow the SLO County APCD and Public Health Department Twitter feeds for the latest updates (@slocleanair and @SLOPublicHealth).

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