

Valley has 'F' air, Lung Association says; data outdated, locals say

By Marc Benjamin
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The San Joaquin Valley's air quality got an "F" in the latest American Lung Association's [State of the Air Report](#).

The report, released Wednesday, issued the failing mark to all eight Valley counties.

The [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District](#), however, says the report uses old data. The district is touting its best air year in its more than 40 years of existence.

Fresno's ozone readings were fourth-worst and particulate matter second-worst in California to Kern County. Hanford-Visalia was third in both categories.

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On the positive side, the report said, air quality has improved for both ozone and particulate matter. Dating to 2004, the report said, unhealthy air days for particulates fell 37 percent, largely because of more wood-burning restrictions.

The report also showed a 39 percent drop in unhealthy days for ozone dating to 2000. It credited the drop to upgrades in vehicle emission controls.

Valley air district officials say the report is outdated, using data from 2012-2014, in the heart of the five-year drought, when dry conditions led to diminished air quality compared with normal rainfall years.

In 2015 and earlier this year, when more normal conditions prevailed, the San Joaquin Valley had its best pollution readings ever, said Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director.

Many other major California counties had "F" grades in the report. Among them: Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Plumas, Alameda, Sacramento, Placer, Orange, Riverside, Imperial and San Bernardino.

An "F" grade is caused by having an average of 3.3 unhealthy particle or ozone days over the three-year period between 2012 and 2014, the report said.

Sadredin said pollution has fallen 80 percent since 1980 in the San Joaquin Valley air basin, which stretches between Kern and San Joaquin counties.

He said 2015 was the cleanest year for ozone, which appears during the summer months. The district reported its lowest number of incidents in which ozone levels exceeded federal standards. There were none in July, generally the most polluted month of the year.

It also was the district's best year for reducing particulate matter. In the most recent year, particulate matter fell to 20 micrograms, 50 percent lower than 2006-07, a recent significant rain year.

Sadredin credits the \$40 billion paid by businesses and farms, along with the state's strict air quality regulations on vehicles.

"We still have a long way to go, but this report ignores the progress and the investment that has been made," he

said.

He described the Lung Association's report as "an elementary school" or "bumper sticker" characterization of the Valley's air quality issues.

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