

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **HEATWAVE MAY THREATEN LOCAL AIR QUALITY**

Increasing daytime highs, dry conditions elevate ozone concentration, risk of wildfires

Weather forecasts predict triple-digit temperatures for much of Southern California this week, leading to an increase of concern for air quality in the Mojave Desert Air Basin, which includes the High Desert in San Bernardino County and Palo Verde Valley in Riverside County.

The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District is tracking daily Air Quality Index forecasts which may worsen to unhealthy categories in the late afternoon on Wednesday and Thursday. When daytime high temperatures reach near and into triple digits, they can lead to elevated concentrations of ground-level ozone, a chemical reaction that occurs when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, refineries and other sources chemically react in the presence of sunlight. Ozone at ground-level — the main ingredient in “smog” — is a harmful air pollutant because of its effects on humans and the environment.

Hesperia, Phelan, Victorville and immediately surrounding communities are especially susceptible to worsening air quality due to their proximity to the Cajon Pass and Interstate 15, from which the Mojave Desert gets much of its ground-level ozone. “Transport” air pollution travels up through the Cajon Pass from the heavily polluted Greater Los Angeles region before dispersing north of the Pass.

High daytime temperatures and low relative humidity also present an increased risk for wildfires and related smoke impacts. Wildfire smoke creates a significant concern to human health as the fine particulates can lodge deep in the lungs and trigger immediate physical reactions.

“Ground-level ozone can be very harmful, especially to those with pre-existing respiratory conditions or to other sensitive groups exercising or participating in outdoor activities,” said Brad Poiriez, MDAQMD Executive Director. “It’s important to check the AQI forecasts and avoid prolonged exposure when ozone levels are elevated.”

MDAQMD releases air quality alerts when the local AQI reaches unhealthy levels. Follow the District on social media @MDAQMD for the latest updates. MDAQMD also urges residents to check the AQI *and* sign up for daily forecasts at [www.MDAQMD.ca.gov](http://www.MDAQMD.ca.gov) or [www.AirNow.gov](http://www.AirNow.gov). Learn more about ground-level ozone at [www.OurDesertAir.com](http://www.OurDesertAir.com).

MDAQMD is the air pollution control authority and permitting agency for the High Desert portion of San Bernardino County and the Palo Verde Valley in Riverside County. It’s governed by a board of 13 members representing nine incorporated municipalities and two counties within its boundaries.

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### **MOJAVE DESERT AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**

**BRAD POIRIEZ**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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