



COUNTY of VENTURA

MICHAEL POWERS
County Executive Officer

800 South Victoria Ave., Ventura, CA 93009 • Hall of Administration
www.ventura.org • www.vcnewschannel.com

ASHLEY BAUTISTA
Public Information Officer
TEL: (805) 654-2640

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Ventura County
Air Pollution
Control District



Air Pollution Control District Media Contact: Dr. Laki Tisopulos (805) 303-4016
CAUSE Media Contact: Lucas Zucker (805) 658-0810 ext. 204

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Wildfire Smoke Text Alert System for Farmworkers Launched in Ventura County

Ventura, CA - With wildfire season upon us, it is crucial to ensure Ventura County's farmworkers are well informed and protected from the health impacts of wildfire smoke. The Air Pollution Control District (APCD) has partnered with the County of Ventura's County Executive Office, the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, and the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), a non-profit organization, to develop a first-of-its-kind text alert system that will alert farmworkers by region when wildfire smoke reaches dangerous levels.

"Over 40,000 farmworkers in Ventura County can now benefit from timely information to help protect themselves at their workplaces during wildfire events. Ventura County is committed to leading the way in protecting farmworkers and working towards a more resilient and healthy community," said County Supervisor and Air Pollution Control District Board member Carmen Ramirez.

The text alert system will send air quality notifications to farmworkers and field supervisors in real-time when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reaches 151 (unhealthy), the level where existing Cal/OSHA regulations require employers to provide N95 respirator masks to outdoor workers for voluntary use. The system will also send alerts when the AQI exceeds 500 (hazardous), the level where outdoor workers are required to wear N95 masks at all times. The farmworker text alert system is being provided at no cost to the subscriber and phone provider charges may apply. The subscriber will also be able to choose between English or Spanish text notifications.

"We are grateful for the community partnerships that have made it possible to launch this alert system to protect the health and safety of farmworkers and strengthen our community's preparedness for wildfire events," said County Executive Officer Mike Powers.



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Farmworkers, including employers and field supervisors, can sign up to receive text alerts by texting SMOKE for alerts in English or HUMO for alerts in Spanish to 855-522-0034.

“This groundbreaking smoke alert system was developed exclusively for our farmworkers. It overcomes language and technology barriers and allows us to communicate vital air quality information during wildfires. The Air Pollution Control District is committed to innovative strategies to keep our community informed and healthy,” said Dr. Laki Tisopulos, APCD Director.

“The agricultural industry is a cornerstone of the Ventura County economy and adds a lot to our quality of life. We have continued to engage with growers on the Farmworker Wildfire Smoke Protection Act, AB73 to protect the health and safety of farmworkers during wildfire events and this new alert system is a great new tool to support that effort,” said Ed Williams, Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner.

The farmworker text message alert system will be launched in partnership with the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program, the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), and other farmworker advocates and growers to help raise awareness and increase farmworker participation in the text alert system. These collaborative partnerships will provide a variety of communications and outreach methods to support the health and safety of the farmworker community.

“This is a critical step forward in protecting the health and safety of Ventura County’s essential farmworkers during severe wildfire events. This smoke alert system will empower farmworkers to know their safety needs and workplace rights in a major wildfire event,” said Lucas Zucker, CAUSE Policy and Communications Director.

For more information about the Farmworker Wildfire Smoke Text Alert System, visit the APCD website at www.vcapcd.org/humo or www.vcapcd.org/smoke.