

Sen. Florez Heated Up Over Ag Burning Ban



[By Dale Yurong](#)

05/25/2007 - The Valley's poor air quality is worsened by the burning of agricultural waste. Stricter rules have been put into place, but now the air pollution control board is taking heat from a local state senator.

On June 1st, new restrictions will be imposed on ag burns. Tree fruit growers farming more than twenty acres will no longer be allowed to pull out their orchards and burn their trees.

The issue of open field burning always leads to heated discussion. "On the west side of the Valley. A lot of agriculture. A lot of ag burning. A lot of farmworker communities. The majority Latino. This population is disproportionately impacted, " says Ray Leon, advocate for Latino issues.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Board recently granted exemptions to the ag burning ban as well as an extension to 2010. The first exemption would be for trees that are diseased. An exemption would also be granted if it is not economically feasible to hire a wood-chipper to dispose of the trees.

But, State Senator Dean Florez called the board's vote unlawful. He says, "This board told me where they stand. They stand with people who want to pollute a little longer and a little more at our expense."

Florez wants the board to reconvene and issue the ag burn ban without any exemptions.

Sarah Sharpe, Coalition for Clean Air, says, "Valley residents themselves have stopped using fireplaces in order to clean up our air, why can't farmers make the same efforts?"

Senator Florez says he expects the California Air Resources Board to advise the Air Pollution Control Board to rescind its decision to grant exemptions. But the local pollution control district board stands by its vote.

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