

Dear Parent:

This year, the Atwater Elementary School District is taking new safety measures to protect the health of all our students. As many of you know, the air pollution levels in the San Joaquin Valley often reach unhealthy levels. Our valley's air does not meet federal or state health standards for ozone or particulate matter, the two pollutants of concern where we live. Exposure to these pollutants can cause many adverse health affects including coughing, sore throat, fatigue, chest pain, asthma attacks and bronchitis. This year, Merced County received an "F" grade for air pollution from the American Lung Association. A study conducted by UCLA estimates that over 17% of Merced County children have asthma. In 2004, the Central California Children's Institute out of California State University, Fresno, estimated that there are 808,000 school absences in the San Joaquin Valley every year from asthma alone.

Therefore, AESD is formalizing procedures to increase safety of students by reducing exposure to pollutants on poor outdoor air quality days. The district has already implemented the use of air quality flags at all sites that indicate the level of air pollution outside by using the color-coded Air Quality Index.

A **green flag** indicates the air is "**good**". Outdoor activities will be permitted for all students.

A **yellow flag** indicates the air outside is "**moderate**". Outdoor activities will be permitted for all students.

An **orange flag** indicates the air outside is "**unhealthy for sensitive groups**". On orange days, sensitive individuals (such as those with asthma or heart conditions) will limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

A **red flag** indicates the air outside is "**unhealthy**" for everyone. On red days, alternative indoor activities will be made available to all students.

It is important to note that physical activity/physical education will proceed despite these infrequent restrictions on outdoor facilities. AESD works with community partners such as the local Asthma Coalition and Lung Association to ensure that our staff has all the necessary resources available to them. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us at the district office.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Brown, RN
AESD District Nurse

Gretchen Lile, RN
AESD District Nurse