

1192 Mariano Dr



Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Attn: Joan Hartmann, Chair

Dear Ms. Hartmann,

My name is Rachel Tanck and I am a pediatric physical therapist who has been working for the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBCPHD) for the last 13 years. I work at the Santa Barbara medical therapy unit under California Children Services (an outpatient non-emergency therapy related facility managed through the SBCPHD). I am a Ojai resident in Ventura County.

Tuesday December 7th until Monday December 11th, 2017, my family and I were evacuated from our home (i.e. under mandatory order) due to the current Thomas Fire. During this time my family evacuated to Buellton and lived in a camper- where the air quality was considered “good” according to the EPA and safe away from the threat of fire.

While displaced from home I did not have childcare in place for my 4 year old daughter and 9 year old son (i.e. childcare center and school were closed and within the mandatory evacuation restrictions). My husband is a state worker and has been working countless hours of mandatory overtime then and currently- since the time Governor Brown had declared the Thomas Fire a state of emergency.

Wednesday December 8, 2017, I had called SBCPHD human resources and the director of SBCPHD (Dr. Van de Reynoso) requesting temporary childcare in Santa Barbara, so I could return to work. Human Resources had stated that such services were not offered by the SBCPHD even in the face of a declared emergency. I was told my only option was to use vacation time if I could not report to work.

The office assistant at the director’s office returned my call noting that she relayed my childcare request and grievance (of having to take vacation when I was forced to evacuate my home and care for my children) to the director and assured me that the director would return my phone call by the end of the day. The director never returned

my call. In light of the fire situation, I was confident that the director had more important pressing matters.

In the evening, Monday, December 11, 2017, my family returned to Ojai. The fires were contained in the vicinity, however the air quality had/has been categorized as very unhealthy (please refer to photos attached). According to the EPA, air quality is categorized into 5 categories- best as 'good' and worst as 'hazardous'. Since my family's return home the air is categorized as 'very unhealthy' which is defined as particulates in the 201-300 range with health alerts indicating "everyone" may experience serious health effects.

Unfortunately, in these air quality conditions, the air quality is not much improved indoors. In lieu of the inescapable and unhealthy air quality conditions for my children in Ojai, I felt it best to move to better air quality conditions with my extended family out of state, which I could temporarily afford (considering lodging/childcare availability).

During the week of December 6th and 11th, SBCPHD held several press releases regarding the recommendations of keeping children indoors. SBCPHD officers also urged parents to take their children on short day trips for several hours away from the poor air conditions in order to "clear their lungs."

On a personal level, I'm not sure if any of you have had the chance to spend an hour in Ojai to experience first hand the "night and day" comparison of the air quality in Santa Barbara versus the air quality in Ojai.

I find the expectation for the staff and the children with disabilities that are served to attend therapy sessions at CCS SB MTU contradictory to the SBCPHD's health advisories during the fire conditions, namely, healthy children should stay home but children with disabilities should not stay home and attend therapy.

The SBCPHD has also sent a conflicting message- to protect the children of the Santa Barbara community while putting its own employees and their families at risk.

In the face of a declared state of emergency with hazardous/unhealthy living conditions, a SBCPHD employee should not be put in a position to decide either to report to a non-emergency workplace (i.e. leave their children with an already displaced neighbor/non-family member in a local hazardous environment) versus exhausting all their vacation balances.

The board of supervisors held a meeting Tuesday, December 12, which SBCPHD employees that were under residential mandatory evacuation were denied 40 hours of paid time off (i.e. staff were mandated to use vacation if not reporting to work). In the same meeting, SBCPHD employees who had lost their home in the fire were granted 80 hours of paid time off. As a county employee I am appreciative of the paid time off granted to those who had lost their homes. I do not understand, however, the reasoning for the denial of paid time off to employees that were displaced from their home, especially with children who warrant childcare (and that whose childcare centers and schools were under mandatory closure/evacuation).

I am requesting the board of supervisors to reconsider their decision, and at the very least, **submit a formal letter to SBCPHD employees outlining their reasoning for their decision to deny paid time off to employees/families that were under mandatory residential evacuation as well as alternative options that employees such as those in my situation could have done, regarding childcare in an area of governmental mandatory closings of schools and childcare centers, so that they could have reported to work during this declared state of emergency.**

Please feel free to contact me should you request a list of schools/childcare centers that my children are enrolled in as well as a list of the closest living relatives (i.e. all extended family members live out of state) that I have access for refuge/childcare.

Being a healthcare professional, myself, it has always been a goal of mine to provide a safe and healthy environment to the children and the community I serve. I ask the board of supervisors, on a personal level, if one of you were faced with the same dilemma (i.e. caring for your children within a unsafe and unhealthy/habitable environment and the uncertainty of losing your home) what measures would you have done and what expectations would you have of your employer (SBCPHD)?

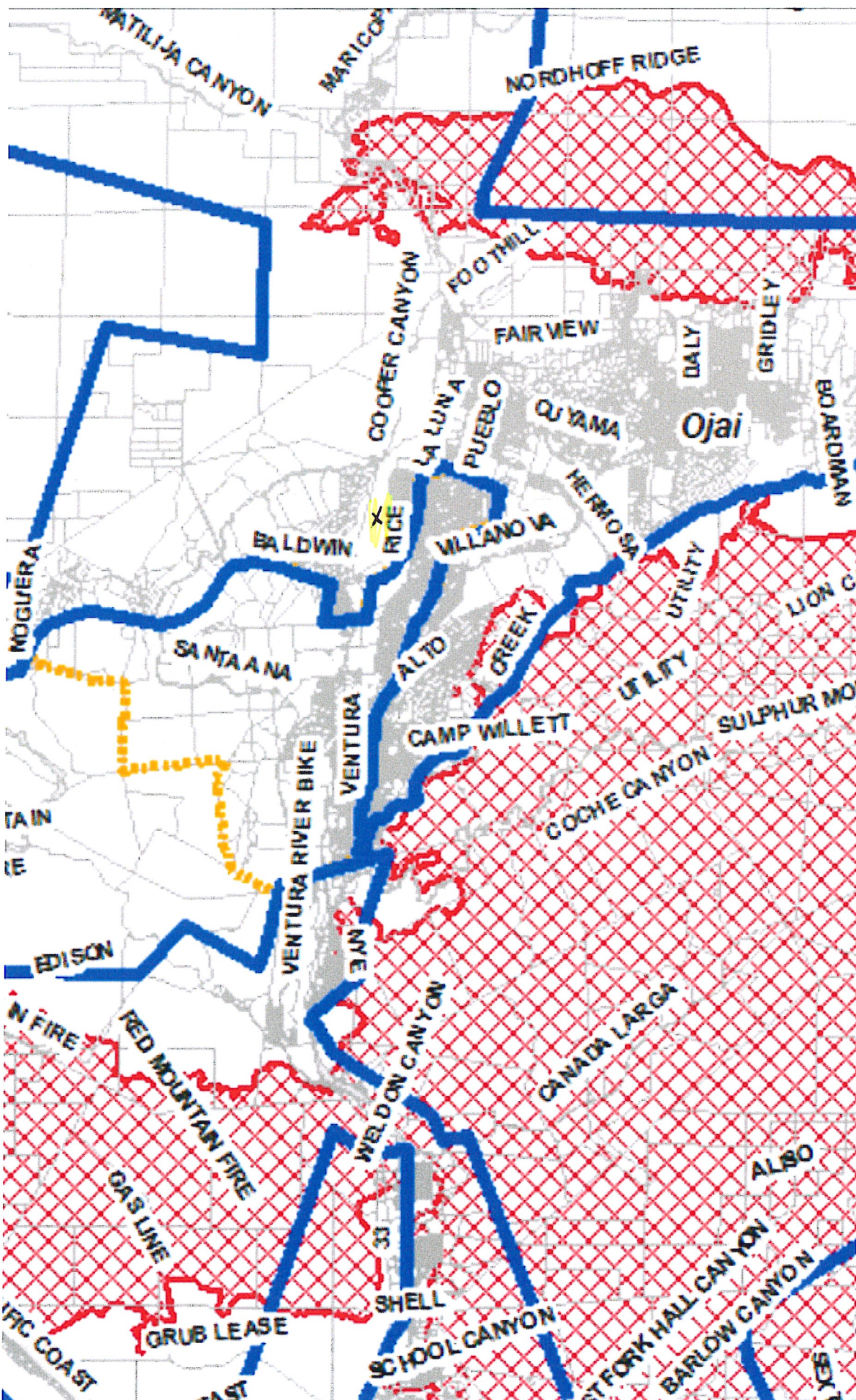
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Tanck, P.T.

Cc: Dr. Van de Reynoso, Director of SBCPHD
Bruce Corsaw, Union rep SEIU local 620
Gov. Edmund Brown

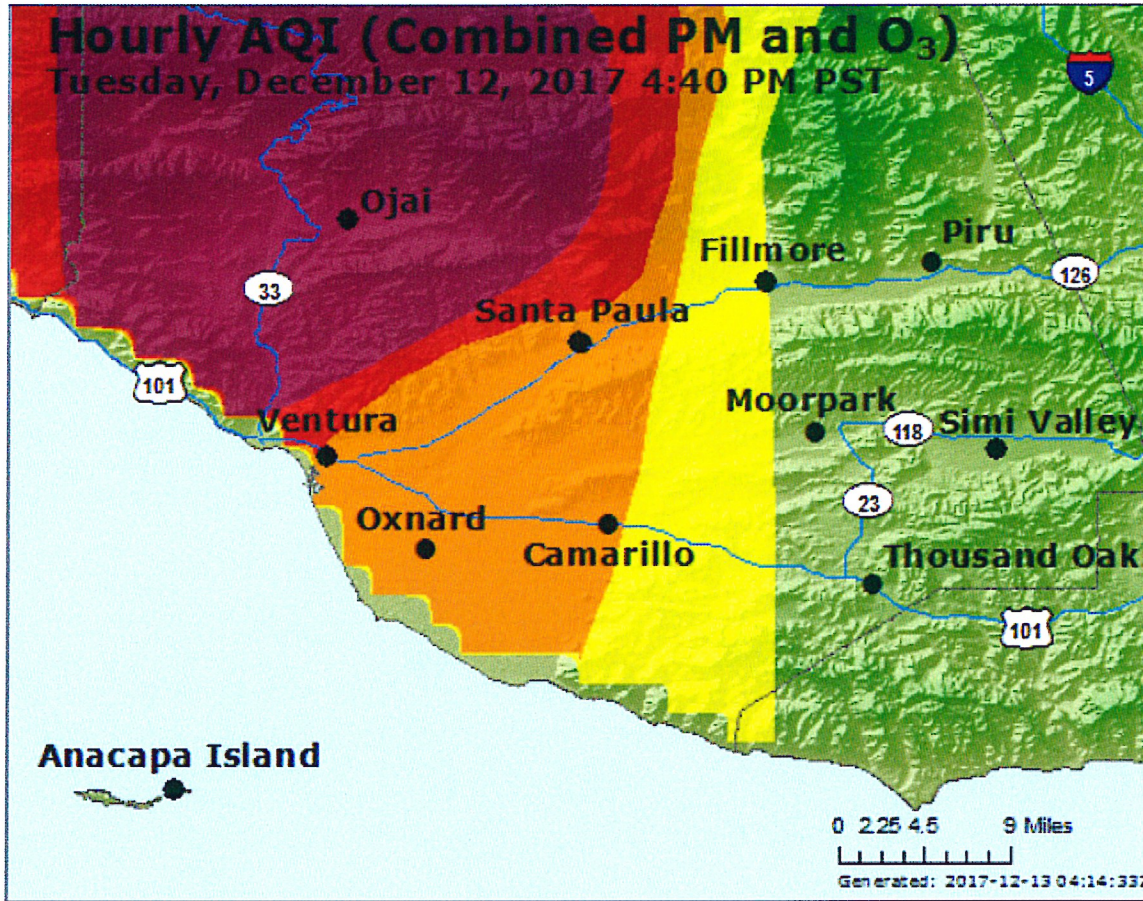


View from my home





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National Parks/Monuments
 Tribal Boundaries

The tribal boundaries shown here are provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and are intended to be used as a general spatial reference only. They are not a formal determination of tribal boundaries by the EPA.

Good
Moderate
USG
Unhealthy
Very Unhealthy
Hazardous
! Action Day

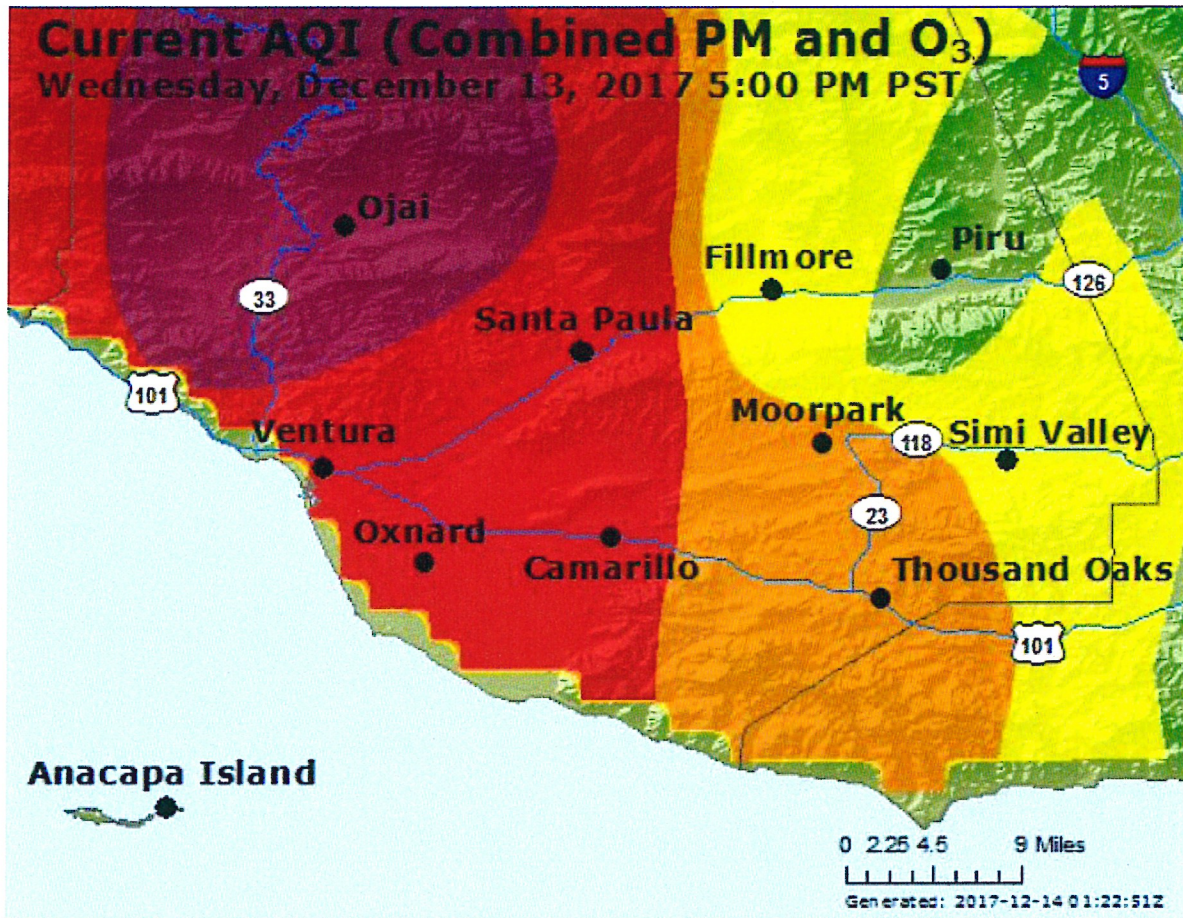
Local Air Quality Resources

Forecast | Today's AQI Forecast

State Air Quality Resources

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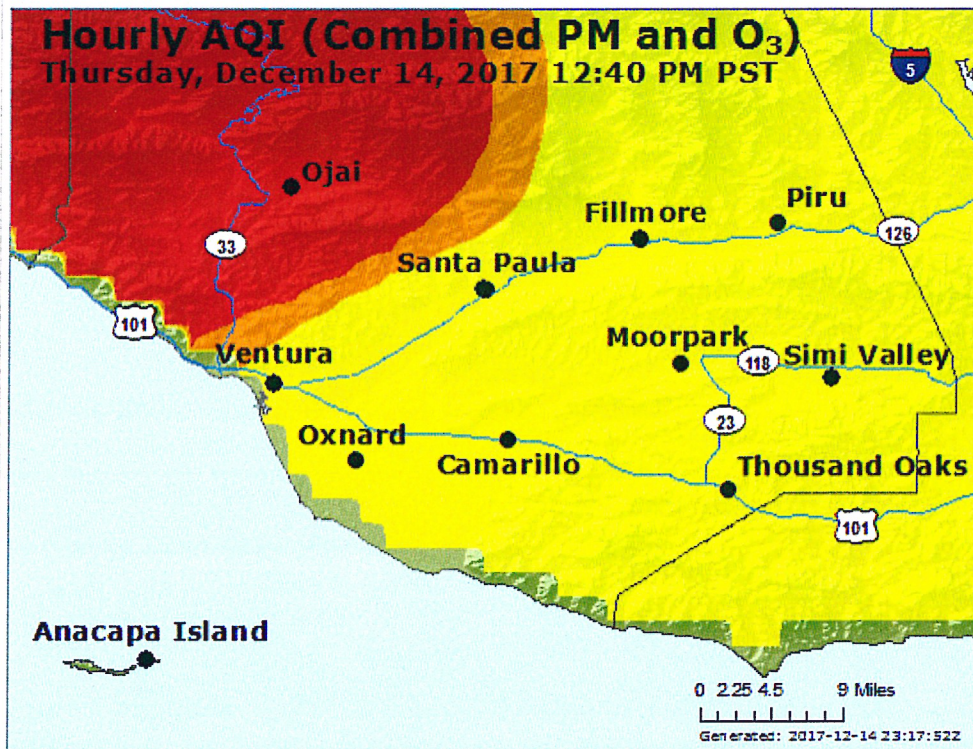
Environmental Protection Agency

AIRNow Home >> California >> Ojai

Data and Forecasts courtesy of:

Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, California Air Resources Board, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District, Mendocino County Air Quality Management District, Mojave Air Quality Management District, Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, Placer County Air Pollution Control District, Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District, Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District, South Coast Air Quality Management District, Ventura County Air Pollution Control District, Yuba County Air Quality Management District, Solano Air Quality Management District

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