

Janet Dietzkamei

Fresno, California, USA

CASE STUDY



Janet Dietzkamei is a retired federal employee and a member of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition. Since moving to Fresno in California's San Joaquin Valley in 2003, Janet has developed severe asthma which has forced her to spend more time indoors, giving up the outdoor lifestyle she previously enjoyed.

"In my community the air quality is bad, especially in winter. According to the monitors that we place around Fresno, it is generally in the moderate to unhealthy for sensitive groups, and there are times when it spikes up to unhealthy for everybody. This is due to the residential wood burning and I also live near highway 180 which was not there when we bought our house."

Janet used to be an avid biker and gardener and loved to walk her dog; but these are activities that she can rarely do now due to the impact on her health from breathing polluted air that often triggers an asthma attack.

The San Joaquin Valley is a prime agricultural area of the United States with over four million residents. Known as the "bread-basket" of the United States, the area exports over \$50 billion in agricultural products at home and globally. Fresno, with a population of 500,000, is the gateway to the world renowned Yosemite National Park. Yet people living in the area breathe some of the most polluted air in North America. One in six children in the region suffer from asthma compared to the national average of one in 12. These children are exposed to unhealthy air on at least 200 days a year.

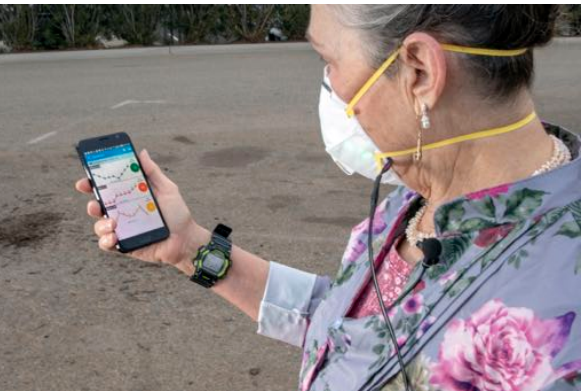
Major sources of air pollution in this area are agricultural burning, wood burning fireplaces and forest fires which are increasing due to climate change impacts. All these pollutants increase fine particles PM 2.5 which pose the greatest health risk by getting deep into the lungs and even the bloodstream.

As a way to reduce air pollution exposure Janet believes in being active in her community and is involved in local initiatives - linked to Assembly Bill 617 - to empower communities to gather more data on air quality. She has installed an air quality monitor in her own backyard which is one step towards protecting her health. For Janet one solution towards cleaner air and healthier communities is:

"Educating, promoting and bringing awareness to the community about the air quality that we have here. Because those of us who have respiratory diseases, we are the canary in the coal mine; we are the ones who register when the air is bad, but everyone here is affected by the air, everyone."

The Central California Asthma Collaborative (CCAC) is calling for better air quality monitoring where people live and work, with immediate adoption of policies and plans that shift away from diesel and reduce emissions from agriculture, transport and industry.

Unmask My City is a global effort by health professionals to promote practical solutions for a clear, downward global trend in urban air pollution by 2030, resulting in significant reductions in illnesses, deaths, and greenhouse gas emissions. Light masks show real time measurements of air pollution levels, from green (good) to red (risky).



Healthy air. Healthy climate.