



NEWS

www.baaqmd.gov

**For Immediate Release
Monday, November 24, 2003**

Contact: Teresa Lee 415.749.4900

**Wintertime Pollution Season Begins
Air District Expects *Spare the Air Tonight* Advisories This Winter**

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District expects seven to ten *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories will be issued this winter, asking that the public voluntarily refrain from burning wood in fireplaces and woodstoves. The advisories will also include a request that the public drive less. *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories will be triggered when unhealthy levels of air pollution are predicted and will be issued at 10 AM for the following 24 hours.

The advisories are expected as a result of new stricter federal standards for small particulate matter, called PM2.5, which are now in effect. The standard was adopted because these small microscopic particles can lodge deep in the lungs, causing serious damage. High levels of PM2.5 are especially harmful for people with asthma or emphysema and for the young and the elderly. The primary sources of PM2.5 in the Bay Area are wood smoke and driving.

"The worst kind of air pollution is created by burning wood," stated Air District CEO Jack Broadbent. "There is abundant health and scientific data on the dangers of exposure to the tiny particles in wood smoke, so we will be asking the public to break the wood burning habit, especially during a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory," Broadbent added.

Winter meteorology plays a role in air pollution. Unlike summer smog that peaks in the late afternoon, wintertime pollution is highest at night and in the early morning hours. On winter evening's, cold air sinks close to the ground beneath a layer of warmer air, forming a shallow inversion. When there is no wind to dissipate pollutants, they become trapped under this inversion layer, building up to unhealthy levels.

The US EPA has set the 24-hour standard for PM 2.5 at 65 micro grams per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). Readings above this level are considered unhealthy for the general public. The Air District will use this standard – which equates to 151 on the Air Quality Index (AQI) - as the trigger for *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories this winter.

For more information visit www.sparetheair.org or call 1-800-Help-Air for a free Woodburning Handbook.

#