



NEWS

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Contact: Jack M. Colbourn 415.749.4900

Wintertime Pollution Season Begins

Air District Extends *Spare the Air Tonight* Season

To be more protective of public health, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) is extending its wintertime program to February 17, 2006.

The program kicks off today, November 14. The Air District will issue Spare the Air Tonight advisories asking that the public drive less and voluntarily refrain from burning wood in fireplaces and woodstoves. ***Spare the Air Tonight*** advisories will be issued at 10 AM for the following 24 hours when unhealthy levels of air pollution are predicted.

***Spare the Air Tonight* advisories are issued to protect public health and to achieve attainment of air quality standards for small particulate matter, called PM2.5.** The standards were adopted because these microscopic particles can lodge deep in the lungs, causing serious damage. Two significant sources of PM2.5 in the Bay Area are driving and residential wood burning.

"The objective of the *Spare the Air Tonight* campaign is to raise awareness of the dangers of wintertime air pollution so that individuals will take action to prevent it," stated Air District CEO Jack Broadbent. "Many residents aren't aware of the harmful effects of wood smoke. Scientific evidence shows that both short- and long-term exposure to small particle pollution is associated with a multitude of health risks. We're extending the program into February to coincide with the typical woodburning season," 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 evenings, 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 and can build up to unhealthy levels.

***Spare the Air Tonight* advisories will be issued when the small particle pollution 24-hour average is expected to reach 55 micrograms per cubic meter (55 µg/m³).** This is the range at which air quality becomes unhealthy for sensitive groups—small children, people with respiratory or heart ailments, and the elderly. The Air District will use this standard--which equates to 130 on the Air Quality Index (AQI)--as the trigger for Spare the Air Tonight advisories this winter.

There is NO Free Morning Commute program in the winter.

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

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