



# NEWS

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## ***Winter Spare the Air Season Begins Today***

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District announces that today marks the opening of the Winter Spare the Air season which restricts burning wood in fireplaces or fire pits when an alert is called.

The season runs from November 1 through February 28, 2011. Wood smoke is a third of the Bay Area's winter air pollution.

"Soot from the Bay Area's estimated 1.4 million fireplaces and woodstoves fills our skies and lungs each winter," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "It's important for residents to check before they burn to help protect their health and the health of all Bay Area residents."

Weather conditions in the wintertime can cause soot pollution to build up and reach unhealthy levels. If air quality is forecast to be unhealthy, a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* will be put in place for the next full calendar day, active from midnight-to-midnight. During an Alert the use of wood-burning devices, including fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits, is forbidden.

"Wood smoke soot is extremely toxic and harmful especially to children, the elderly and people with respiratory conditions," said Peg Strub, chief of the Department of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology for Kaiser Permanente San Francisco. "When inhaled, it is absorbed into the lungs and blood stream and can decrease lung function, irritate the airways, aggravate asthma and chronic bronchitis, and increase the severity of other respiratory illnesses."

Bay Area residents can check before they burn by:

- Visiting [www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov) or [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org)
- Calling 1-877-4-NO-BURN
- Signing up for e-mail AirAlerts at [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org) or phone alerts by calling 800-430-1515.

Those who burn during a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* will receive a warning for the first violation, a second violation is subject to a \$400 ticket. The ticket amount will increase with any subsequent violations. Residents and businesses that burn wood as their only source of heat are exempt from the regulation.

There are also year-round prohibitions on excessive smoke, and on the burning of garbage and other harmful materials in fireplaces and woodstoves.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District ([www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov)) is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area.

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