



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Recommended no burn called for Monday evening and Tuesday *Unhealthy levels of wood smoke pollution from Christmas lingering in Bay Area air*

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is asking the public to refrain from burning today and tomorrow to help avoid unhealthy air in the Bay Area. This recommended no burn request is being called to help Bay Area weather recover from the unhealthy levels over the holiday weekend.

Lingering smoke pollution from the holiday weekend, coupled with low wind conditions have caused smoke pollution from Christmas Eve and day to fill Bay Area skies creating unhealthy breathing conditions for all 9 counties of the Bay Area region.

"Wood smoke is extremely unhealthy and when it gets trapped in Bay Area air it is similar to those days when smoking would fill up planes and restaurants - those smoked filled conditions are what we are experiencing now," said Jack Broadbent, Executive Officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "Smoke pollution levels are very high, similar to what we see when we have major forest fire events around the Bay Area. We need the public to avoid burning to prevent serious air quality conditions."

Smoke pollution from the holiday weekend has built up to unhealthy breathing levels. Children, older adults and people with asthma, emphysema, COPD, bronchitis, lung cancer and other chronic lung conditions will likely experience difficulty breathing, tightness in the chest, coughing or wheezing. Smoke filled skies, coupled with cool still air are creating unhealthy breathing conditions for Bay Area residents.

Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particles or soot accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

Cold, still weather patterns will continue through tomorrow. During these weather conditions, the earth cools the air close to the ground, which creates an inversion layer of warmer air above. When there is no wind, wood smoke and other pollution trapped under this lid of warm air can build up rapidly to unhealthy levels throughout the region.

During this Winter Spare the Air Alert, it is illegal for Bay Area residents and businesses to use their fireplaces, woodstoves and inserts, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits, or any other wood-burning devices. Homes without permanently installed heating, where woodstoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat, are exempt.

The public must check before they burn during the Winter Spare the Air season which runs from November 1 through February 29. The daily burn status can be found:

- On the Air District Web sites: www.baaqmd.gov or www.sparetheair.org
- Via the toll-free hotline 1-877-4-NO-BURN (complaints can also be filed via the hotline)

- By signing up for AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org or phone alerts at 1-800-430-1515

Wood smoke is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area and contains harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, as well as toxins which are linked to increased cancer rates in adults. In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area contributes about one-third of the harmful particulate pollution in the air.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area.

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