



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACTS: Ralph Borrmann

415.749.4900

Winter Spare the Air Alert called for Wednesday, January 23

Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the season's eighth *Winter Spare the Air Alert* for Wednesday, January 23, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

The large high pressure system which dominated the weather last week is finally weakening and moving slowly east. However, particulate levels today have increased and are threatening to reach unhealthy levels tomorrow. California's Central Valley is also experiencing unhealthy air quality. Light rains expected tomorrow will not be accompanied by a low pressure system strong enough to reduce pollution levels. Burn bans are also in place in the Sacramento and San Joaquin air basins.

"The region will again experience high particulate pollution levels," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "Due to the *Winter Spare the Air Alert* calls, we have not yet exceeded the federal health standard, which is exactly what the alerts are designed to do."

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

Starting this winter, first-time violators will be given the option to take a wood smoke awareness class, online or by mail, to learn about the hazards of wood smoke pollution in lieu of paying a penalty. Second violations will result in a \$500 ticket and subsequent ticket amounts will be higher.

The public must check before they burn during the *Winter Spare the Air* season, which runs from November 1 through February 28. 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
- Via the Spare the Air iPhone and Android Apps

In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area is the single largest source of air pollution, contributing about one-third of the harmful fine particulate pollution in the air. Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particles accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

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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