



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2013

CONTACT: Ralph Borrmann

415.749.4900

Tenth straight *Winter Spare the Air Alert* called for Tuesday, December 17 *Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited*

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the season's fourteenth *Winter Spare the Air Alert* for Tuesday, December 17, which bans the burning of wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

The Air District is calling an unprecedented tenth straight *Winter Spare the Air Alert* as the result of the prolonged dry and stagnant weather pattern that continues to prevail across the Bay Area. Hazardous fine particulate pollution has been building up in the region for over a week and is forecast once again to reach unhealthy levels on Tuesday. This weather system is also affecting air quality in Sacramento and the Central Valley, triggering wood-burning bans in those regions as well.

"Because of this prolonged dry and still weather pattern, air quality continues to be unhealthy throughout the Bay Area," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "Under these conditions, just like cigarette smoke in a crowded room, fireplaces can impact the entire region."

Based on the latest meteorological forecasts, air quality may improve on Wednesday if clean onshore winds develop by late afternoon. However, if the onshore winds are slow to arrive in the Bay Area, air quality may not improve as much as needed. In this case, another *Winter Spare the Air Alert* may be necessary for Wednesday.

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.

Like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains fine particles and carcinogenic substances that make the air harmful to breathe. Wood smoke is the major source of air pollution in the Bay Area in the wintertime and is especially harmful to children, the elderly, and people with respiratory conditions.

First-time violators will be given the option of taking a wood smoke awareness class, online or by mail, to learn about the hazards of wood smoke pollution in lieu of paying a \$100 ticket. 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.

###