



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First Winter Spare the Air Alert of the season called for December 19

Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the season's first *Winter Spare the Air Alert* for Monday, December 19, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

Air quality is expected to be unhealthy in the region due to light winds and warmer air that is acting like a lid, trapping cold still air and wood smoke pollution close to the ground.

"Wood smoke pollution levels are rising and expected to reach unhealthy levels," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "By not burning wood, we are keeping our neighborhoods smoke-free and protecting the health of our families and neighbors so everyone can breathe easy."

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*. Exemptions are available for homes without permanently installed heating, where woodstoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat. Anyone whose sole source of heat is a wood-burning device must use an EPA-certified or pellet-fueled device that is **registered** with the Air District to qualify for an exemption. An open hearth fireplace no longer qualifies for an exemption.

Like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains fine particles and carcinogenic substances that make the air harmful to breathe inside and outside the home. 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. One fireplace burning can pollute an entire neighborhood. Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particulate accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

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Continued... First Winter Spare the Air Alert of the season...

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baagmd.gov) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. For more information about Spare the Air, visit sparetheair.org.

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