



NEWS

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Quiet Winter Spare the Air season comes to a close

SAN FRANCISCO - The Bay Area Air Quality Management District's 2015-2016 Winter Spare the Air season ended February 29, with only one Winter Spare the Air Alert issued.

The nine-county region saw consistently cleaner air this season as frequent storm systems moved through California beginning in November and continuing through early February, helping to disperse air pollution. During the 2014-2015 Winter Spare the Air Season, there was a stretch of 56 straight days during January and February without rainfall in San Francisco. In contrast, during the 2015-2016 Winter Spare the Air season, the longest stretch of dry weather in San Francisco occurred during February and lasted only 14 days.

"This year's winter weather proved helpful for reducing harmful wood smoke pollution, but we may not be so lucky next year." said Jack Broadbent, the Air District's executive officer. "Now is the time to consider replacing that older, more polluting fireplace. Later this summer, the Air District will offer funding for Bay Area residents to make the switch to cleaner heating options to benefit the health of their family and neighbors."

The Air District recently announced a \$3 million funding program for the upgrade of wood-burning devices to cleaner heating options for Bay Area residents beginning in late summer. More details about this program will be available in the coming months.

Wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the region is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area, containing harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide. Exposure to wood smoke has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks.

The Air District received a total of 1,302 wood smoke complaints from residents. One ticket was issued to a Santa Clara County resident who was observed to be in violation of the Wood Burning Rule.

Complaints by County

Alameda – 239
Contra Costa – 147
Marin – 155
Napa – 26
San Francisco – 48
San Mateo – 288

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Santa Clara – 303

Solano – 16

Sonoma – 76

TOTAL – 1,302*

*No county information provided – 4

The rule still requires, on a year-round basis, that residents who burn in a fireplace or outdoor fire pit burn cleanly using dry, seasoned firewood and not burn garbage, leaves or other material that would cause excessive smoke. Residents who exceed the visible smoke provision of the Wood Burning Rule could still be subject to a ticket, even outside the November–February Winter Spare the Air season.

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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