

Regulation 6, Rule 3: Wood-Burning Devices

The Wood-Burning Rule

April 2011

In order to protect Bay Area residents from the health impacts of fine particulate matter and to reduce harmful emissions from wood smoke pollution, the District's Board of Directors adopted Regulation 6, Rule 3: Wood-burning Devices on July 9, 2008.

Along with banning the burning of wood and solid fuels when the District issues a *Winter Spare the Air* alert, it limits excessive visible emissions, prohibits burning inappropriate materials such as garbage and magazines, restricts the sale and installation of non-EPA certified wood burning devices within the District, and requires labeling on firewood and solid fuels sold within the District. Outdoor recreational burning, agricultural burning and other open burning are also banned on alert days during the Winter Spare the Air season.

The *Winter Spare the Air* season runs from November 1 through the end of February. *Winter Spare the Air* alerts are announced by 2 p.m. the day before an alert takes effect. Alerts take effect at midnight and run for 24 hours until the following midnight.

Fine Particulate Matter & Health Effects

Exposure to fine particulate matter or PM_{2.5} is by far the leading public health risk from air pollution in the Bay Area, accounting for more than 90% of premature deaths related to air pollution.

- Health impacts from PM_{2.5} include increased asthma emergency room visits, respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions, chronic bronchitis, non-fatal heart attacks and cancer onset.
- In the winter, approximately 33% of PM_{2.5} pollution is attributed to wood burning from the estimated 1.4 million wood-burning devices in the Bay Area.
- The U.S. EPA recently designated the Bay Area in non-attainment for the national 24-hour PM_{2.5} air quality standard.

Enforcement of the Rule

Air District inspectors conduct patrols on *WSTA* alert days and throughout the season for potential violations of the rule. Inspectors focus their routes in areas with high complaints or high burning rates.

- First time violators are sent a warning letter along with materials on how to comply with the rule and information on the health effects of wood smoke pollution. Second time violators are issued a Notice of Violation which also assesses a \$400 penalty. Penalties are progressive if there are subsequent violations.
- On a typical *WSTA* alert patrol day, inspectors observe approximately 18,000 homes for potential violations throughout the Bay Area. In addition, during the 2010/2011 *WSTA* season alone, inspectors conducted 81 inspection patrols for potential opacity (excess visible emissions, excessive smoke) on 35 days.

For a copy of the Wood-Burning Rule, please visit: www.baaqm.gov/rules.

For additional information on the *Winter Spare the Air* program, visit: www.sparetheair.org.

Exemptions

Exemptions are available for persons that have no other form of permanently installed heat in their home.

- Upon receipt of a Warning Letter for burning during a *WSTA* alert, individuals can submit a form certifying under penalty of perjury that they meet the exemption conditions. To date, 49 permanent exemption certifications have been submitted.
- In addition, where a person has a broken heater, they can submit a certification form for a Seasonal Exemption which expires at the end of the same season (a residence may only claim one seasonal exemption, it cannot be renewed nor is the residence eligible at any time in the future for another seasonal exemption). To date, 11 seasonal exemptions have been claimed, all have expired.
- Those claiming the exemption must still comply with the other requirements of the rule (e.g., no excess smoke, cannot burn garbage, etc.). In addition, to assist low income residents, staff also compiled a list of utility payment assistance programs offered by PG&E which is posted on the Air District's website.

Advertising & Outreach

Advertising and outreach for the program focuses on educating the public about the health effects of wood smoke pollution and on how to comply with the rule. Outreach efforts are focused in areas with high burning rates and/or high wood smoke complaints.

- Messages are delivered in multiple languages through TV, radio, print, Internet, billboard, grassroots and in-theater advertising. Extensive media relations are undertaken to share the message via newspapers and television news. Social media is used extensively, by the end of last season there were close to 4,000 Twitter and Facebook followers and fans.
- Educational materials are distributed to the public via direct mail, public events, door-to-door canvassing and through the Air District website. Educational materials and media messages were available in multiple languages and were distributed to non-English media and advertising channels.
- In addition to advertising, members of the public can be notified of *Winter Spare the Air* alerts by calling the dedicated 1-877-4NO-BURN phone line for alert status or by signing up for email AirAlerts or phone alerts.

2010/2011 Program Stats and Highlights

During the 2010/2011 season, 4 *Winter Spare the Air* alerts were issued and 1 day exceeded the national $PM_{2.5}$ 24-hour ambient air quality standard. In comparison, in 2009/2010, 7 *WSTA* alerts were issued with 9 excesses, and, in 2008/2009, 11 *WSTA* alerts were issued and there were 13 excesses. The Air District also began issuing voluntary alerts last season, asking the public to voluntarily curb wood-burning in an effort to avoid *WSTA* alerts on subsequent days.

In the 2010/2011 season, 59 warning letters and 2 Notices of Violation were issued. This year, prior to the season commencement, over 500 reminder letters were sent to residences that received violation warning letters from the previous two winters. As with the previous *WSTA* season, the public entered wood smoke complaints either online through the website or by phone. There were 213,368 calls to 1-877-NO-BURN phone line and there were 102,854 AirAlerts and 17,636 phone alerts subscribers. The 1-877-NO-BURN and phone notifications are also available in multiple languages.

The Air District conducts surveys during the *Winter Spare the Air* season to assess the effectiveness of the program. The 2010/2011 survey results reflect increased awareness of the rule and reduced wood-burning in the Bay Area. Support for the wood-burning rule remains strong at 76%.