Smoke from wood burning and wildfires contains toxic, microscopic particles called PM$_{2.5}$, which are so small that several thousand could fit on the period at the end of this sentence.

These particles can easily penetrate the lungs and enter the bloodstream and cause immediate health impacts as well as long term respiratory and heart problems.

Wildfires and wood burning are the largest source of fine particulate pollution in the Bay Area.

When PM$_{2.5}$ is forecast to reach unhealthy levels year-round, the Air District issues a Spare the Air Alert—Burn Ban to notify the public that air quality is forecast to be unhealthy and that wood burning is prohibited. The alert may be called up to three days prior to the expected unhealthy air event to protect public health and keep pollution levels from building up.

The Air District amended the Wood Burning Rule in 2019, to further protect residents from the harmful health impacts of wood smoke. The rule makes it illegal to burn wood, manufactured firelogs, pellets or any other solid fuel indoors and outdoors when a Spare the Air Alert—Burn Ban is in effect, year-round. The amendments to the rule allow the Air District to ban wood burning anytime of the year when particulate pollution becomes unhealthy rather than only during winter months.

Each day by 2 p.m., the Air District will issue an air quality forecast for the next day. If a Spare the Air Alert—Burn Ban is issued, wood burning will be prohibited the next day from midnight to midnight.

Residents who fail to comply with the Wood Burning Rule are subject to penalties. First-time violators can choose to take a wood smoke awareness course instead of paying a $100 ticket. Second violations are $500 and increase with each additional ticket.
The rule also has additional requirements including, but not limited to:

- Prohibits dense smoke, which is often caused by burning unseasoned wood with excess moisture
- Prohibits the burning of garbage or other inappropriate material such as junk mail, pallets or treated wood
- Prohibits the installation of wood-burning devices in new construction
- Requires landlords in areas with natural gas service to provide a form of heat, other than a wood-burning device, to their tenants.

Illegal to use during a Spare the Air Alert—Burn Ban.

Consider converting to an electric fireplace or heat pump. With increasing access to renewable energy sources in the Bay Area, electric heating devices are becoming the cleanest option to protect air quality and the climate.

Check if a Spare the Air—Burn Ban is in effect or file a Wood Burning Complaint
1-877-4NO-BURN (1-877-466-2876)
baaqmd.gov/complaints

Sign up for text, email or phone alerts at sparetheair.org/alerts

Connect with us @SpareTheAir

More info at sparetheair.org or baaqmd.gov

www.baaqmd.gov

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area, including Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, southwestern Solano and southern Sonoma counties.