



NEWS

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***Spare the Air Tonight* Season Begins Monday, November 20, 2006 Air District Asks Residents Not to Burn Wood and to Drive Less**

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District will kick off its wintertime *Spare the Air Tonight* season on Monday, November 20. *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories will be issued when unhealthy levels of air pollution are forecast. *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories urge the public not to burn wood, to refrain from strenuous physical activities, and to drive less on those nights when small particle pollution concentrations adversely affect air quality. The winter campaign ends on February 16, 2007.

***Spare the Air Tonight* advisories are issued to protect public health**, and to help the Bay Area achieve attainment of air quality standards for fine particulate matter, or PM_{2.5}. These microscopic particles can lodge deep in the lungs, causing serious damage. The two major Bay Area sources of PM_{2.5} are residential wood burning and motor vehicles.

"The *Spare the Air Tonight* campaign aims to raise public awareness about the dangers of wintertime air pollution, and to encourage individuals to take action to prevent it," says Air District Executive Officer Jack Broadbent. "Scientific evidence shows that exposure to small particle pollution is associated with a multitude of health risks. We're asking Bay Area residents to make simple clean air choices this winter to protect the health of their families and communities. Whenever a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory is issued, don't burn wood, and drive less."

Winter weather plays a prominent role in air quality. Unlike summer smog that peaks in the late afternoon, wintertime pollution is at its worst at night and in the early morning hours. On winter evenings, the ground cools the air close to the earth, which can become trapped beneath a layer of warmer air, forming a shallow temperature inversion. When there is no wind or rain to dissipate pollution, it builds up under this inversion layer and reaches unhealthy levels.

This year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set a new health-based air quality standard for PM_{2.5}, substantially lowering their previous threshold. This will likely result in more *Spare the Air Tonight* advisories this winter.

There is NO Free Transit element to the *Spare the Air Tonight* campaign.

For more information visit www.sparetheair.org or call 1-800-HELP AIR for a free *Wood Burning Handbook*.

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