



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Winter Spare the Air Alert in effect for Saturday, December 24 *Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited on Christmas Eve*

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the ninth *Winter Spare the Air Alert* of the season for Saturday, December 24, 2011, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

Weather conditions are creating a cap over the Bay Area trapping wood smoke pollution over the entire Bay Area region.

"Smoke pollution can cause immediate health consequences," said Jack Broadbent, Executive Officer of the Bay Area Air District. "We want everyone to be able to enjoy this holiday season at home with loved ones rather than spending it in the emergency room with a relative having difficulty breathing."

Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particles or soot accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

Cold, still weather patterns will continue through tomorrow. During these weather conditions, the earth cools the air close to the ground, which creates an inversion layer of warmer air above. When there is no wind, wood smoke and other pollution trapped under this lid of warm air can build up rapidly to unhealthy levels throughout the region.

During this *Winter Spare the Air Alert*, it is illegal for Bay Area residents and businesses to use their fireplaces, woodstoves and inserts, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits, or any other wood-burning devices. Homes without permanently installed heating, where woodstoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat, are exempt.

The public must check before they burn during the *Winter Spare the Air* season which runs from November 1 through February 29. 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

Wood smoke is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area and contains harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, as well as toxins which are linked to increased cancer rates in adults. In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area contributes about one-third of the harmful particulate pollution in the air.

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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