



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wood burning and cold, still weather caused poor air quality last week ***Bay Area exceeded national health standard***

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District issued four consecutive *Winter Spare the Air Alerts* last week, and exceeded the national health standard for soot pollution on three days.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, burning one pound of wood generates approximately the equivalent amount of cancer-causing compounds in unhealthy smoke as three cigarettes.

“When pollution levels build up as they did last week, everyone suffers – especially our most sensitive residents, the young, the elderly and those with respiratory conditions,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “It is vitally important that residents protect their health and the health of all Bay Area residents by not burning wood when an alert is in place.”

Preliminary air monitoring data indicates that the Bay Area exceeded the 24-hour national health standard for fine particulate pollution on Tuesday, December 6, Friday, December 9 and Saturday, December 10. Stagnant and cold weather patterns trapped pollution near the ground, causing unhealthy breathing conditions.

On Monday, Air District meteorologists saw the potential for pollution levels to rise to unhealthy levels over the week. The Air District called recommended no burn days on Monday and Tuesday and *Winter Spare the Air Alerts* on Wednesday and Thursday and were able to avoid exceeding the health standard on those two days. Two more alerts were called for Friday and Saturday, but the buildup of pollution from the week paired with a strong inversion layer caused the Bay Area to exceed health standards.

For a day by day breakdown of pollution levels, please visit:
<http://www.sparetheair.org/~media/STA/Files/AQ-Summary.ashx>.

The Air District received more than 500 reports of illegal wood burning and about 100 potential violations in the Bay Area during the four *Winter Spare the Air Alerts*. Those who burn during a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* will receive a warning for the first violation; a second violation is subject to a \$400 ticket. The ticket amount will increase with any subsequent violations.

The *Winter Spare the Air* season runs from November 1 through February 29. The daily burn status can be found online at www.baaqmd.gov or www.sparetheair.org, by calling 1-877-4-NO-BURN (complaints can also be filed via the hotline) or by signing up for AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org or by signing up for phone alerts at 1-800-430-1515.

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. For more information about *Spare the Air*, visit www.sparetheair.org.

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