



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Winter Spare the Air Alert called for Monday, December 23

Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the season's sixteenth *Winter Spare the Air Alert* for Monday, December 23, which bans the burning of wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

A strong weather system moved through the Bay Area on Thursday and Friday, temporarily returning air quality to healthy levels, but a high pressure system is setting up once again across the region and air pollution is forecast to increase significantly to unhealthy concentrations on Saturday.

"The Bay Area Air District is once again caught in a stagnant pattern, and fine particulate pollution is expected to rise to unhealthy levels throughout the region," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. "Dry weather is forecast for the week and threatens to cause high levels of pollution to build up through the Christmas holiday. It is important for residents to refrain from burning wood and further contributing to the unhealthy air that will plague our region."

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

Like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains fine particles and carcinogenic substances that make the air harmful to breathe. Wood smoke is the major source of air pollution in the Bay Area in the wintertime and is especially harmful to children, the elderly, and people with respiratory conditions.

First-time violators will be given the option of taking a wood smoke awareness class, online or by mail, to learn about the hazards of wood smoke pollution in lieu of paying a \$100 ticket. Second violations will result in a \$500 ticket, and subsequent ticket amounts will be higher.

The public must check before they burn during the *Winter Spare the Air* season, which runs from November 1 through February 28. 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
- Via the Spare the Air iPhone and Android Apps

In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area is the single largest source of air pollution, contributing about one-third of the harmful fine particulate pollution in the air. Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particles accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

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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