



NEWS

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Winter Spare the Air season begins November 1

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is announcing the beginning of the *Winter Spare the Air* season on Tuesday, November 1.

During a Winter Spare the Air Alert, it is illegal to burn wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors, during the Winter Spare the Air season from November 1 – February 28.

“Wood smoke from the Bay Area’s 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves continues to be the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the region,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “The Air District’s more stringent amendments to our wood-burning rule serve to further protect public health from wood smoke pollution.”

In October 2015, the Air District adopted a series of amendments to its Wood Burning Rule, which was originally passed in 2008.

Starting November 1 the following new requirements will go into effect:

1. Anyone whose sole source of heat is a wood-burning device must use an EPA-certified or pellet-fueled device that is **registered** with the Air District to qualify for an exemption. An open hearth fireplace will no longer qualify for an exemption.
2. Bay Area residents who begin a chimney or fireplace remodeling project that costs over \$15,000 and requires a building permit will only be allowed to install a gas-fueled, electric or EPA-certified device.
3. No wood-burning devices of any kind may be installed in new homes or buildings being constructed in the Bay Area.

For more information about recent requirements to the Air District’s Wood Burning Rule, see the amendments press release at <http://bit.ly/1KDjbDm>.

Cold temperatures and calm winds during the winter season cause wood smoke to build up in the region, causing unhealthy air quality in neighborhoods. The Air District calls a Winter Spare the Air Alert for the next full calendar day when weather conditions trap pollution close to the ground and when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy. The Air District may call Winter Spare the Air Alerts up to three days in advance to keep air pollution from building up and exceeding federal standards. During an alert, the use of wood-burning devices such as fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits is prohibited. In San Francisco, the National Park Service now prohibits recreational beach fires at Ocean Beach in Golden Gate National Recreation Area through the end of February.

Exposure to wood smoke has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains many carcinogenic substances, such as

Continued... Winter Spare the Air season begins...

particulate matter and carbon monoxide, which make the air harmful to breathe. Smoke pollution from fireplaces builds up inside homes as well as in yards and neighborhoods. The fine particulate pollution in wood smoke is especially harmful for children, the elderly and those with respiratory conditions. Fine particulate pollution is known to cause more than 90 percent of the premature deaths related to air pollution.

To support the move towards cleaner heating sources, the Air District approved \$3 million in funding this year to provide assistance for approximately 1,200 Bay Area households to replace older, more polluting fireplaces with cleaner electric heat pumps, or natural gas or propane stoves or inserts.

Priority was given to low-income residents, residents located in areas highly affected by wood smoke, and households exempt from Winter Spare the Air Alert burn bans due to the fact that their wood-burning device was their sole source of heat.

Bay Area residents can find out if a Winter Spare the Air Alert is in effect by:

- Calling 1-877-4NO-BURN
- Visiting www.sparetheair.org or www.baaqmd.gov
- Signing up for automatic e-mail AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org
- Signing up for automatic phone alerts by calling 1-800-430-1515
- Downloading the Spare the Air iPhone and Android apps.

First-time violators of the Wood Burning Rule will be encouraged to take a wood smoke awareness course to learn more about the health impacts from wood smoke and the weather conditions that lead to unhealthy air quality in the winter. Those violators who choose not to take the course will receive a \$100 ticket. Second violations are subject to a \$500 ticket, with the ticket amount increasing for any subsequent violations. There are also year-round prohibitions on excessive smoke and burning garbage and other harmful materials like junk mail, plastic, wood pallets and more in fireplaces and woodstoves. Residents concerned about wood smoke pollution may call 1-877-4NO-BURN or visit www.baaqmd.gov to file a complaint or to get more information.

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

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