



NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Spare the Air season starts November 1

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is announcing the start of the Winter Spare the Air season, Wednesday, November 1.

The Air District calls Winter Spare the Air Alerts when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy due to fine particulate pollution, primarily from wood smoke. When an alert is in effect, it is illegal to burn wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors in the Bay Area for a full 24-hours during the Winter Spare the Air season from November 1 – February 28.

“Just a few fireplaces burning in a neighborhood can cause unhealthy air for many in the surrounding community,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “The recent Northern California wildfires are a serious reminder of smoke impacts Bay Area residents experience when weather traps smoke in our region.”

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. Natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces do not cause unhealthy smoke in the air and can be used during Winter Spare the Air Alerts.

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 also 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 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.

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

- **NEW text alerts! To sign up, text the word “START” to the number 817-57**

- 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 or Android app

First-time violators of the Wood Burning Rule have the option 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](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#). For more information about Spare the Air, visit www.sparetheair.org.

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