



NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Spare the Air Alert called for New Year's Day

Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the season's seventeenth Winter Spare the Air Alert for New Year's Day, Monday, January 1, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors for 24 hours.

A high-pressure system is still in place over the Bay Area and is forecast to continue to trap smoke near the ground, causing air quality to be unhealthy on January 1. Cold, still weather allows pollution from wood smoke to build up in Bay Area neighborhoods, leading to poor air quality conditions.

"This past year was a difficult one for air quality in the Bay Area, as smoke impacts from wildfires led to unprecedentedly high levels of air pollution in some parts of the region," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. "Wood smoke contains many of the same properties as wildfires, and we are calling a Winter Spare the Air Alert on New Year's Day in order to reduce wood burning and begin the year by protecting air quality in our communities."

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. Exemptions are available for homes without permanently installed heating, where woodstoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat. 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 no longer qualifies for an exemption.

Like cigarette smoke, wood smoke contains fine particles and carcinogenic substances that make the air harmful to breathe inside and outside the home. 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:

- **Via NEW text alerts! To sign up, text the word “START” to the number 817-57**
- 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. One fireplace burning can pollute an entire neighborhood. Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing fine particulate accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

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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