



NEWS RELEASE

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Air District strengthens wood burning rule to protect air quality & public health during wildfires

Spare the Air Alerts now ban wood burning year-round

SAN FRANCISCO – Today the Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s Board of Directors voted to adopt new amendments that will strengthen the agency’s wood burning regulation to safeguard public health against the hazards of fine particle pollution, especially during wildfires.

Previously, wood burning was prohibited during Winter Spare the Air Alerts from November through February. The rule amendments extend the ban on wood burning year-round when particulate matter pollution reaches unhealthy levels. The extension of the wood burning prohibition ensures high concentrations of air pollution, such as those that occur during wildfires, are not increased by wood burning activities.

“As wildfires become increasingly normal in California, it is critical we take action to safeguard public health when wildfire smoke affects air quality,” said Jack Broadbent, executive director for the Air District. “The strengthening of this rule will reduce harmful smoke pollution and help protect the health of every Bay Area resident during wildfires.”

The adoption of the amendments is one action in a larger effort by the Air District to reduce the health and air quality impacts of wildfires. The Air District’s Wildfire Air Quality Response Program is a comprehensive program intended to prevent, prepare for and respond to future wildfires. The program ensures that health-protective measures and strategies are in place during wildfire smoke events.

Like wildfire smoke, wood smoke contains carcinogenic substances, such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, which are harmful when inhaled. Exposure to wood smoke has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and increased risk of heart attacks. The fine particulate pollution in wood smoke is especially harmful for children, the elderly and those with respiratory conditions.

During PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs, or other loss of electricity or gas service, there is an exemption that allows wood burning when there is no alternate form of heat available. However, wood burning is discouraged during PSPS events because it coincides with increased fire risk and often with wildfires, adding more air pollution when levels may already be high.

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

- Signing up for 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 or phone AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org
- Downloading the Spare the Air iPhone or Android app

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](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). For more information about Spare the Air, visit www.sparetheair.org.

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