



NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Spare the Air season begins today

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

The Air District calls a Winter Spare the Air Alert 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 to February 29.

“The recent wildfires are a powerful reminder of the health impacts that can result from harmful smoke pollution,” said Jack Broadbent, executive director for the Air District. “In the winter, during certain weather conditions, wood smoke builds up to unhealthy levels in neighborhoods throughout the Bay Area and can cause similar health issues. This winter, please consider cleaner heating options to protect your family’s health and help your neighbors breathe easier.”

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.

The Air District is proposing an amendment to its wood burning regulation to further protect the health of Bay Area residents when wildfire smoke impacts the region. The Air District’s Board of Directors will vote on the proposed amendment on November 20, 2019.

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.

Cold temperatures and calm winds trap smoke from household woodburning around homes and increases fine particulate pollution build up inside and outside residences. Natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces are allowed during Winter Spare the Air Alerts.

The Air District may call Winter Spare the Air Alerts up to three days in advance to prevent air pollution from exceeding federal standards. During an alert, the use of wood burning devices such as fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits is illegal. 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.

Bay Area residents can find out if a Winter 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 AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org
- Signing up for automatic phone alerts at www.sparetheair.org
- Downloading the Spare the Air iPhone or Android app

First-time violators of the Wood Burning Rule are 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](#) 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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