



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** December 4, 2020

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### **Spare the Air Alert called for Saturday due to wood smoke**

*Use of wood-burning devices is prohibited*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is issuing the winter season’s first Spare the Air Alert for tomorrow, Saturday, December 5, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors.

Smoke from increased wood burning is expected to cause air quality to be unhealthy due to cold overnight temperatures combined with light east winds. A high-pressure system in place over Northern California will act like a lid, trapping smoke at ground level. Offshore winds may also allow air pollution from the San Joaquin Valley to drift into the Bay Area.

“The Bay Area is expected to experience unhealthy air quality due to weather conditions that trap wood smoke near the ground and allow it to build up,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. “When air quality is unhealthy, it is important we all do our part to reduce harmful pollution by not burning wood.”

It is illegal for Bay Area residents and businesses to use their fireplaces, wood stoves, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits or any other wood-burning devices during a Spare the Air Alert for fine particle pollution. Exemptions are available for homes without permanently installed heating, where wood stoves 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 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 wood burning around homes and increases fine particulate pollution buildup inside and outside residences. Natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces are allowed during Spare the Air Alerts.

The Air District may call Spare the Air Alerts for fine particle pollution 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 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](http://www.sparetheair.org) or [www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov)
- Signing up for automatic e-mail AirAlerts at [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org)
- Signing up for automatic phone alerts at [www.sparetheair.org](http://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 prohibitions on excessive smoke and burning garbage and other harmful materials like junk mail, plastic, wood pallets and more in fireplaces and wood stoves. Residents concerned about wood smoke pollution may call 1-877-4NO-BURN or visit [www.baaqmd.gov](http://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](http://www.sparetheair.org).

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