



Spare the Air Alert

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Air District issues Spare the Air Alert for New Year's Day

Use of all wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air District is issuing the winter season's third Spare the Air Alert for Thursday, January 1, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors.

Personal fireworks and residential wood burning are expected to cause localized elevated pollution levels this New Year's. While rain is in the forecast, it is not expected to be sufficient to disperse pollution, and light winds will allow smoke and other pollutants to build up across the Bay Area. Both fireworks and wood smoke contribute to unhealthy air, especially in neighborhoods where fine particles can accumulate.

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. Natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces are allowed during Spare the Air Alerts.

Using fireworks during New Year's celebrations can cause unhealthy spikes in air pollution, creating excess smoke and ash in neighborhoods, and further exacerbating existing air pollution levels. Smoke from exploding firecrackers and fireworks can make it difficult for people to breathe and trigger asthma attacks, coughing and wheezing.

Wood smoke contains the same harmful pollutants found in wildfire and cigarette smoke, including particulate matter, benzene and formaldehyde. These substances pose serious health risks, particularly for children, seniors and people with respiratory conditions. Wood burning is the leading source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area.

The Air District may call Spare the Air Alerts for fine particle pollution up to three days in advance to prevent air pollution levels from becoming elevated. During an alert, the use of wood-burning devices

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.

To find out if a Spare the Air Alert is in effect:

- Sign up for text alerts. To sign up, text “START” to 81757
- Call 1-877-4NO-BURN
- Visit www.sparetheair.org or www.baaqmd.gov
- Sign up for e-mail or phone alerts at www.sparetheair.org/alerts
- Download the Spare the Air iPhone or Android app

On October 1, 2025, the Air District updated Wood Burning Rule, lowering the Spare the Air Alert threshold from a daily forecast level of 35 to 25 micrograms per cubic meter of fine particulate matter. Lowering the threshold ensures alerts are called earlier, before pollution builds up, protecting vulnerable residents. This means alerts will occur more often when air quality is in the mid-moderate range or above on the Air Quality Index, since wood smoke at these levels can still harm our health.

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. Violators who choose not to take the course will receive a \$100 ticket. Those second violations are subject to a \$500 ticket, with the ticket amount increasing for 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/complaints to file a complaint or to get more information.

The [Bay Area Air District](http://www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). For more information about Spare the Air, visit www.sparetheair.org.

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