



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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Winter Pollution Season Begins

Unhealthy Pollution Levels Expected

November 18, 2004, San Francisco, CA— Due to new and stricter air quality standards, “**Spare the Air Tonight**” advisories are likely to be issued in the Bay Area this winter. Residents will be asked to stop burning wood in fireplaces and woodstoves, and to drive less. The advisories will be issued at 10 AM for the following 24 hours when levels of air pollution are expected to be unhealthy for all residents to breathe.

The Air District is predicting air quality based on new and stricter federal standards for fine particulate matter, called PM2.5. The standards were adopted because of the adverse lung and heart damage caused by inhaling fine particles. Particulate pollution is especially dangerous for people with asthma, emphysema or heart problems. Children are also adversely affected because they have immature lungs and higher respiratory rates than adults.

The primary sources of PM2.5 in the Bay Area are wood smoke and driving. In the winter, wood smoke accounts for about 30 percent of the fine particles in the air. Burning wood also generates toxics including dioxin, benzene and formaldehyde.

“Wildfires in September brought heavy wood smoke pollution to many Bay Area communities,” said Air District CEO Jack Broadbent. “We don’t want to create this same type of pollution by burning wood in fireplaces. There is abundant health data on the dangers of exposure to fine particles in wood smoke, so we will be asking the public to break the wood burning habit, especially during a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory,” Broadbent said.

Wintertime pollution is highest at night and in the early morning hours when cold air sinks close to the ground beneath a layer of warmer air, forming an inversion and trapping pollution very close to the ground. A prediction of 151 on the Air Quality Index (AQI) - when the air quality is unhealthy for all residents - will trigger a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory.

To protect your health and to find out when a *Spare the Air Tonight* advisory has been issued, sign up for email AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org. For a free Woodburning Handbook call 1-800-Help-Air or visit www.sparetheair.org.

(more)

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Here are some tips for reducing pollution this winter:

1. Reduce or eliminate wood burning altogether.
2. Switch to a gas fireplace or insert.
3. Buy an energy-efficient EPA-certified woodstove.
4. Cut down on the number of days you use your fireplace or woodstove by weatherizing your home.
5. If you must use wood, burn only clean, seasoned (i.e., dried for 6-12 months) firewood.
6. Don't use "chimeneas," or temporary outdoor fireplaces.
7. Never burn garbage, plastics, glossy paper or wood that has been painted or treated.
8. Ask your city council to adopt the Model Wood Smoke Ordinance. For a copy of the ordinance, and the cities and counties that have adopted it, visit www.sparetheair.org.
9. Refrain from burning wood when the Air District issues a "Spare the Air Tonight" advisory.
10. Carpool, take transit and trip link to reduce motor vehicle pollution.

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