



NEWS

EMBARGOED UNTIL:
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Winter Spare the Air Season Begins Sunday, November 1 *Wood Burning Rule makes it illegal to burn when air quality is unhealthy*

SAN FRANCISCO – In an effort to protect public health, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will open the *Winter Spare the Air* season on Sunday, November 1, and begin enforcing a regulation that restricts wood burning in the Bay Area through February 28, 2010.

Wood smoke is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area. Certain weather conditions in the wintertime cause the air to remain still. When these conditions occur, the Bay Area Air District calls a *Winter Spare the Air Alert*.

“This winter, Bay Area residents must check before they burn,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. “It is illegal to burn wood or firelogs when a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* is in effect. Wood smoke pollution is associated with a number of serious health risks and is particularly harmful to children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems.”

This winter is the second winter season the Wood Burning Rule is in effect. The rule passed in July 2008.

Between November 1, 2009, and February 28, 2010, the Air District will declare a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* when air pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy levels. During a *Winter Spare the Air Alert*, the use of wood-burning devices, including fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits, is forbidden. There are expected to be, on average, approximately 15-20 *Winter Spare the Air Alerts* during the season.

This season, *Winter Spare the Air Alerts* will be declared the day prior to the alert going into effect. Each day by 2 p.m., the Air District will issue an air quality forecast. If air quality is forecast to be unhealthy, a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* will be called for the next day. The Alert will be in place for 24 hours – one calendar day – active from midnight-to-midnight.

Those who burn during a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* will receive a warning for the first violation and a second violation is subject to a \$400 ticket. The ticket amount will increase with any subsequent violations, depending on the severity of the infraction. Residents and businesses that burn wood as their only source of heat are exempt from the regulation.

Bay Area residents can check before they burn by:

- Visiting www.baaqmd.gov or www.sparetheair.org
- Calling 1-877-4-NO-BURN
- Signing up for e-mail AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org or phone alerts by calling 800-430-1515.

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Winter Spare the Air Season Begins...continued...

Under the new rule, only EPA-certified wood stoves or fireplace inserts, pellet stoves, or natural gas devices can be sold or installed in new construction or remodels. The new rule also places year-round prohibitions on excessive smoke, and on the burning of garbage and other harmful materials in fireplaces and woodstoves.

Wood smoke is a major source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area and contains harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, as well as toxins such as dioxin, which is linked to increased cancer rates in adults. In the winter, wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area contributes about one-third of the harmful particulate pollution in the air.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area.

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