



NEWS

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Winter Spare the Air season ends

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air District's 2008/09 Winter Spare the Air season ended February 28.

The season began November 1, 2008. This was the first winter season that the Air District began enforcing a regulation that restricts wood burning in household fireplaces, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits throughout the Bay Area when air quality is predicted to be unhealthy.

"We were pleased with the public's response to the wood burning rule," said Jack Broadbent, Air District executive officer. "Tens of thousands of Bay Area residents signed up for email and phone alerts and more people than ever are aware of the health impacts of particulate pollution from wood smoke."

During the Winter Spare the Air season, email alert sign-ups jumped from 50,000 in September to 100,000 currently. A new phone alert service was added in November 2008 and 12,000 households signed up to receive alerts. Nearly 500,000 calls were placed to the 877-4-NO BURN line to check the daily burn status. Air District surveys indicate that 24 percent of Bay Area households did not burn wood or reduced their wood burning because of the Winter Spare the Air program - up 18 percent from last year - and 76 percent of respondents indicated that they supported the new wood burning rule.

Between November and February, the Air District declared 11 *Winter Spare the Air Alerts*. This season's 11 alerts fell below the historic season average of approximately 20 days of unhealthy air quality. The District exceeded the national air quality health standard 13 days this season.

A total of 1,442 complaints were received by the Air District during the four-month season. Air quality inspectors patrolled Bay Area neighborhoods and 254 warning letters were sent to residents who were observed to be in violation of the wood burning rule. To date, no penalties have been collected but there are remaining open cases being investigated. A listing of complaints and warning letters issued by county is as follows:

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Complaints by County

Alameda County	208
Contra Costa County	239
Marin County	389
Napa County	43
San Francisco County	56
San Mateo County	169
Santa Clara County	178
Solano County	29
Sonoma County	131

TOTAL 1442

Warning Letters by County

Alameda County	32
Contra Costa County	55
Marin County	55
Napa County	12
San Francisco County	0
San Mateo County	15
Santa Clara County	33
Solano County	11
Sonoma County	41

TOTAL 254

The rule still requires, on a year-round basis, that residents who burn in a fireplace or outdoor fire pit burn cleanly using dry, seasoned firewood and not burn garbage, leaves or other material that would cause excessive smoke. Residents that exceed the visible smoke provision of the wood burning rule could still be subject to an Air District citation and penalty.

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 to the harmful particulate pollution in the air.

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

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