



# NEWS

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## **DON'T BURN THROUGH ANOTHER TAX REFUND**

*Air District encouraging Bay Area residents to apply tax refunds on fireplace gas inserts to reduce pollution*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Winter Spare the Air season has come to an end, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is encouraging Bay Area residents to consider using this year's tax refund to invest in their health, home and the environment for next winter season.

Purchasing a gas insert for your fireplace is an easy way to lower energy bills, reduce indoor and outdoor air pollution and help keep your family and pets healthy.

"Our Winter Spare the Air program is in place to help safeguard public health," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "By converting their wood burning fireplace or stove to a natural gas insert, residents can make an investment in the health of their families and communities, *and* make an improvement that will heat their homes more efficiently."

Wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the Bay Area is the largest source of wintertime air pollution. Wood smoke contains harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, as well as toxins, which are linked to increased cancer rates. Converting to a natural gas insert can provide the same cozy ambiance while substantially reducing harmful emissions inside and outside the home.

Due to the dry winter season and weather conditions that trap wood smoke pollution in our neighborhoods, the Air District issued 15 Winter Spare the Air alerts this winter—the most alerts since the program started in 2008. On Winter Spare the Air days, children, adults and animals who suffer from respiratory ailments often experience more distress. According to a December 2011 media report, asthma-related emergency room admissions skyrocketed.

"In addition to creating pollution, fireplaces are also notoriously inefficient heaters," said Daniel Waitz, owner of Berkeley Heat and Tubmakers, which charges \$3,500-5,000 to install a gas insert. "Natural gas is not only clean burning, but it's more efficient," "Fireplaces suck hot air out of the house and up the chimney – all while spewing hazardous soot that affects the health of residents and pets throughout the region. In fact, 85 percent of heat is lost through a chimney."

To encourage people to switch over from wood burning, for the next three months, Waitz will pay the sales tax for anyone who mentions Winter Spare the Air when purchasing a gas insert.

According to tax expert Steven K. Sui, homeowners in the Bay Area will receive refunds above the national average of \$3,500. The Air District is encouraging residents to earmark their refunds for gas inserts as a way to improve their overall quality of life, keep heat in their homes and improve and still enjoy the ambiance of a warm winter fire.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District ([www.baaqmd.gov](http://www.baaqmd.gov)) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area.

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