



# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Challenging Winter Spare the Air season comes to a close**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s 2013-2014 *Winter Spare the Air* season ended February 28, with a total of 30 *Winter Spare the Air Alerts* issued, tying the record for most alerts since the 2006-07 winter season.

A stubborn high pressure ridge clung off the coast of California throughout most of the winter season blocking Pacific storms that would have helped disperse air pollution.

“This dry winter brought with it an unprecedented stretch of bad air quality and no-burn days,” said Jack Broadbent, the Air District’s executive officer. “While weather conditions were challenging for air quality, it would have been much worse without the help of Bay Area residents that didn’t burn wood during alerts. Thanks to these efforts, the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area was greatly reduced.”

A severe lack of rainfall in the Bay Area coupled with low winds, cool temperatures and wood burning caused the region to experience prolonged episodes when fine particle pollution accumulated to unhealthy levels. On days when air quality was expected to be unhealthy, the Air District issued *Winter Spare the Air Alerts*, restricting the use of fireplaces, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits.

Wood smoke from the 1.4 million fireplaces and wood stoves in the region is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area, containing harmful pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide. Exposure to wood smoke—like cigarette smoke—has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and even increased risk of heart attacks. Breathing particulate pollution accounts for more than 90 percent of premature deaths related to air pollution.

Surveys and preliminary air quality monitoring data indicate that the Wood Burning Rule has been an effective instrument in reducing wood smoke over the past six years in the Bay Area. Thirty percent of Bay Area residents indicated they are burning less wood even on days when an alert has not been issued. Surveys also indicated that 75 percent of Bay Area residents support the Air District’s Wood Burning Rule.

Those found to be burning during a *Winter Spare the Air Alert* for the first time were given the option of taking an online or written wood smoke awareness course in lieu of paying a \$100 ticket. So far this winter season, 136 Bay Area residents have chosen to take and have passed the wood smoke awareness course. This number will increase in the coming months as residents respond to violation notices received later in the winter season.

Those that violated the rule a second time were subject to a \$500 ticket, with fines increasing for subsequent violations. The Air District received a total of 5,091 wood smoke complaints from residents. A

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Continued...*Winter Spare the Air* season closes...

total of 267 tickets were issued to residents who were observed to be in violation of the Wood Burning Rule.

Complaints and violations by county:

**Complaints by County**

Alameda - 619  
Contra Costa - 772  
Marin – 1,058  
Napa - 138  
San Francisco – 202  
San Mateo- 644  
Santa Clara - 717  
Solano – 194  
Sonoma - 699

**TOTAL – 5,091\***

**Violations by County**

Alameda – 13  
Contra Costa – 21  
Marin – 40  
Napa- 15  
San Francisco – 0  
San Mateo – 67  
Santa Clara – 29  
Solano – 17  
Sonoma – 65

**TOTAL - 267**

*\*48 complainants provided no county information*

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 who exceed the visible smoke provision of the Wood Burning Rule could still be subject to a ticket, even outside the November–February *Winter Spare the Air* season.

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. For more information about Spare the Air, visit [www.sparetheair.org](http://www.sparetheair.org).

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