



NEWS RELEASE

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Spare the Air Alert extended through Tuesday due to wood smoke pollution

Use of all wood-burning devices is prohibited

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is extending the Spare the Air Alert through Tuesday, December 20, which bans burning wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel, both indoors and outdoors.

Despite a weak low-pressure system moving through Northern California, light surface winds will cause high air pollution levels to remain over the region. Cold overnight temperatures, patchy dense fog, and limited vertical mixing will continue to trap wood smoke at ground level, leading to unhealthy air quality in the Bay Area.

“Wood smoke pollution is continuing to create unhealthy air quality in our region,” said Sharon Landers, interim executive officer of the Air District. “Wood burning has immediate and long-term health impacts, harming those most vulnerable.”

It is illegal for Bay Area residents and businesses to use their fireplaces, wood stoves, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits or any other wood-burning devices during a Spare the Air Alert for fine particle pollution. Exemptions are available for homes without permanently installed heating, where wood stoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat. Anyone whose sole source of heat is a wood-burning device must use an EPA-certified or pellet-fueled device that is registered with the Air District to qualify for an exemption. An open-hearth fireplace no longer qualifies for an exemption.

Like cigarette or wildfire smoke, wood smoke contains carcinogenic substances, such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, which are harmful when inhaled. Exposure to wood smoke has been linked to serious respiratory illnesses and increased risk of heart attacks. The fine particulate pollution in wood smoke is especially harmful for children, the elderly and those with respiratory conditions.

Low temperatures and calm winds trap smoke from wood burning around homes and increases fine particulate pollution buildup. Natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces are allowed during Spare the Air Alerts.

The Air District may call Spare the Air Alerts for fine particle pollution up to three days in advance to prevent air pollution from exceeding federal standards. During an alert, the use of wood burning devices such as fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves and outdoor fire pits is illegal. In San

Francisco, the National Park Service also prohibits recreational beach fires at Ocean Beach in Golden Gate National Recreation Area through the end of February.

Bay Area residents can find out if a Spare the Air Alert is in effect by:

- Signing up for text alerts. To sign up, text the word "START" to the number 817-57
- Calling 1-877-4NO-BURN
- Visiting www.sparetheair.org or www.baaqmd.gov
- Signing up for automatic e-mail AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org/alerts
- Signing up for automatic phone alerts at www.sparetheair.org/alerts
- Downloading the Spare the Air iPhone or Android app

First-time violators of the Wood Burning Rule are encouraged to take a wood smoke awareness course to learn more about the health impacts from wood smoke and the weather conditions that lead to unhealthy air quality in the winter. Those violators who choose not to take the course will receive a \$100 ticket. Second violations are subject to a \$500 ticket, with the ticket amount increasing for any subsequent violations.

There are also prohibitions on excessive smoke and burning garbage and other harmful materials like junk mail, plastic, wrapping paper, wood pallets and more in fireplaces and wood stoves. Residents concerned about wood smoke pollution may call 1-877-4NO-BURN or visit www.baaqmd.gov to file a complaint or to get more information.

The [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). For more information about Spare the Air, visit www.sparetheair.org.

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