



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT
SINCE 1955

November 7, 2008

Dear Municipal Partner:

You are likely aware that the Bay Area Air Quality Management District recently adopted a new regulation prohibiting wood burning on days when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy. I'm writing to provide you with (1) background on the issue of wood smoke, (2) a summary of the new rule, and (3) tips for compliance, so that you can respond to questions from your employees and encourage their participation in improving the health of your community.

1. The Dangers of Wood Smoke

Wood smoke contains fine particles, known as PM_{2.5}, that can easily bypass the natural filters in the nose and penetrate deep into the lungs. Health studies have linked long-term exposure to fine particle air pollution with serious health effects like aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis and even premature death in people with heart and lung disease. Children are especially vulnerable because they breathe faster than adults, taking in three to four times more air – and air pollution – per pound of body weight.

Wood-burning fires not only impact the family members in your home, but they also put your neighbors in jeopardy. On winter evenings, air cools and sinks close to the ground, while warm air acts as a lid over the cold air. When there is no wind to disperse pollutants from fireplaces, smoke becomes trapped under this lid and can build up to unhealthy levels, affecting the entire community.

2. Wood-Burning Rule

Between November 1 and February 28, Air District meteorologists will conduct daily forecasts of air pollution levels for the Bay Area. If air quality is determined to be unhealthy, they will declare a **Winter Spare the Air Alert**, during which time the use of wood-burning devices – including fireplaces, pellet stoves, wood stoves, and outdoor fire pits – is illegal. However, people who burn wood as their only source of heat may be exempt from the regulation.

First-time violators will receive a warning letter from the Air District with information about the new rule, how to check the daily burn status for fireplaces and woodstoves, and information on burning smart. Residents who violate the no-burn provision a second time could receive a fine ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending on the severity of the infraction.

3. What Your Constituents Can Do To Reduce Wood Smoke Pollution

All of us want to take good care of our families and neighborhoods, and how we choose to heat our homes has a direct impact on this goal. **Residents should check before they burn wood by calling 1-877-4-NO-BURN or by visiting www.sparetheair.org.** Other tips include:

- Switching to a gas fireplace or insert.
- Ensuring your home is properly weatherized to use energy in the most efficient way.
- When burning is allowed, burn only short, hot fires using clean, dry hardwood with plenty of air.
- Never burn garbage, plastics, glossy paper or wood that has been painted or treated.

As a community leader, you are essential in helping the Air District spread the word about the dangers of wood smoke and the new wood-burning rule. If you have questions, or would like to receive free, bilingual educational materials for your staff and/or constituents, please call our Communication and Outreach Office at 415-749-4900.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Jack Broadbent
Chief Executive Officer/Air Pollution Control Officer

Spare the Air

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939 ELLIS STREET • SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA 94109 • 415.771.6000 • WWW.BAAQMD.GOV