

# Don't let your neighborhood's health go up in smoke.

Wood burning produces particulate matter (PM) which consists of fine particles. PM from woodburning may include: wood tars, gases, unburned fuel, soot (unburned carbon), and ash (unburnable materials).

Smoke can also contain benzene, formaldehyde and other toxic chemicals. PM can be trapped in your lungs for years, contributing to chronic lung disease and more.

## "Don't Light Tonight"

"Don't Light Tonight" is a voluntary program during the fall and winter in which the District asks residents not to use their woodstoves and fireplaces when air pollution approaches unhealthy levels. The program is aimed at keeping pollution levels of particulate matter below the health-based standards.


Concentrations of particulate matter can reach high levels due to low-lying air inversions. These inversions trap pollutants close to ground level affecting the air we breathe. These cold weather conditions, coupled with the increased use of fireplaces and woodstoves, can create pollution levels that lead not only to poor air quality but also to health problems for many residents.

When heating with wood, a pellet-fueled heater or an EPA Phase II-certified device is recommended. If a wood burning appliance is your sole source of heat, the District asks that you 'light it right' and follow the guidelines listed in this brochure.

To receive "Don't Light Tonight" advisories go to [www.ysaqmd.org](http://www.ysaqmd.org) and sign up for EnviroFlash, a free service to notify you of air quality alerts.



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**Where  
there's fire,  
there's smoke.**

**Learn how wood smoke air pollution  
affects the health of you  
and your family**



# Wood Smoke and Your Health

Preventing fine particle air pollution is important. Fine particle air pollution is invisible to the naked eye and can be inhaled deep into your lungs. The smaller the particle, the deeper it penetrates and the longer it remains in your body. People with respiratory illnesses, heart disease, children and the elderly are particularly sensitive to the effects of wood smoke, but it can affect anyone. Health effects associated with breathing fine particle air pollution from wood smoke include:

- reduced lung function, especially in children
- increased severity in asthma, emphysema, pneumonia and bronchitis
- aggravated heart disease
- increased susceptibility to lower respiratory diseases
- irritated eyes, lungs, throat and sinuses
- headaches and allergies

## Long-term exposure to wood smoke may lead to:

- chronic obstructive lung disease
- chronic bronchitis
- increased risk of cancer and genetic problems

## Light It Right

Although there may be nothing like a cozy fire on a cold winter night, you could unknowingly be polluting your neighborhood and affecting the health of your family and your neighbors.

Fine particle air pollution produced from wood burning is a common source of odor, reduced visibility and health problems. Wood stoves and fireplaces emit pollution directly into the air, producing tiny particles that can seep into homes through closed doors and windows.

### Air Quality Guide for Particle Pollution

Health Categories	Health Advisory
<b>VERY UNHEALTHY</b> 201 to 300	People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
<b>UNHEALTHY</b> 151 to 200	People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
<b>UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS</b> 101 to 150	People with heart or lung disease, older adults and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
<b>MODERATE</b> 51 to 100	Unusually sensitive people should consider reducing prolonged or heavy exertion.
<b>GOOD</b> 0 to 50	None

## If You Light it, Light it Right...

If you decide to light a fire, there are several simple things you can do to reduce the amount of fine particles emitted into the air:

### Burn only dry, seasoned wood

Unseasoned wood burns poorly and creates thick smoke because of its high moisture content.

### Build small, hot fires

Large fires smolder and pollute more.

### Some things you should never burn

Garbage, glossy paper, painted and chemically treated wood can create toxic smoke and fumes.

### Have your chimney inspected on a regular basis

A professional chimney sweep should inspect your chimney once a year.

### Give your fire plenty of room

A fire with a generous air supply reduces heavy smoke emissions.

### Make sure your wood stove and fireplace inserts fit properly

Inserts that are too large produce more heat than you need and create excess smoke when you use the damper.

### Watch your chimney top

If you see heavy smoke coming out of your chimney, the wood is not burning efficiently.

### Extinguish the flame

Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house.

### Storing wood

When storing wood, stack it under cover in a dry ventilated area. Freshly cut wood needs to be stored for about eight to twelve months.