



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Why You Shouldn't Burn Wood This Winter

(Davis, CA) – As winter settles in Yolo and Solano County, so does cooler temperatures, brisk mornings and often, the smell of wood smoke permeating the air.

Many people associate cold weather with a crackling fireplace and a cup of hot chocolate or associate wood burning with their holiday tradition. What many people don't realize is that burning wood significantly contributes to particulate matter (PM) in the air and is hazardous to your health.

"Particulate matter can be inhaled by anyone who smells wood smoke," said Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District's Director Mat Ehrhardt. "There is no distinction between young and old, fit or not. Particulate pollution can affect everyone."

Particulate matter, or particulate pollution, is a complex mixture of chemicals that vary in size, shape and chemical composition. Some particles, such as dust, soot or smoke, are large enough to be seen with the human eye, while others are so small they are 1/30 the width of a human hair.

When particulate pollution is inhaled, it can cause serious health problems because they can lodge deep into the lungs or even enter the bloodstream. Short term health effects from PM include coughing and sneezing and can worsen existing conditions such as asthma and heart disease. In addition, since the region sits in a basin, winter inversion layers trap wood smoke and other pollutants close to the ground, adding to the exposure and length of time residents are subjected to particulate pollution.

"Already this winter season, we have had 21 'Don't Light Tonight' advisories in the District," said Public Information Officer Jenny Tan. "Many of those days had temperature inversions or ridges of high pressure that prevented pollutants from dispersing."

Though rain and wind provide temporary reprieves from PM and help clear out pollutants, there are many more days of stagnant or stationary air expected before winter ends that will keep particulate pollution confined to the region and the air we breathe.

Here are some tips to help lower your PM footprint:

- Refrain from burning wood.
- If you do burn wood, make sure the wood is burned properly and is well seasoned.
- Never burn plastic, rubber or trash.
- If it's cold, turn up the heater or use electric blankets instead.
- Replace your old wood stove with a cleaner appliance.

Here are some tips to lower your exposure to particulate matter:

- Limit your outdoor physical activity or avoid areas that smell like wood smoke.
- Sign up to receive free advisories or alerts at <http://ysaqmd.enviroflash.org/>.
- Change out household air filters regularly.
- Close windows and doors when particle levels are high.
- Explore options like air purifiers with HEPA filters to reduce PM inside the home.

For more information about the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, including signing up for air quality alerts and the monthly newsletter, visit: www.ysaqmd.org. Connect with the District on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/YoloSolanoAir or on Twitter at: www.twitter.com/YoloSolanoAir.

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