



News Release

Headline: The Southwest Clean Air Agency is issuing a Stage I Burn Ban for Clark County and an Air Quality Advisory for Cowlitz and Lewis Counties

Release Date: Thursday, November 15, 2018

Smoke from indoor and outdoor wood burning and forest fires have led to increasing levels of fine particle air pollution in Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis Counties. The Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) is issuing a Stage I Burn Ban effective immediately throughout Clark County and an Air Quality Advisory for Cowlitz and Lewis Counties. Colder nights followed by limited daytime ventilation and dispersion have caused fine particle air pollution levels to rise toward the federal health-based standard. These conditions are forecast to continue through 8:00 am Saturday morning.

All outdoor burning and the use of all fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves and inserts is prohibited in Clark County until 8:00 am Saturday November 17, 2018. If wood burning is your only source of heat, you are exempt from this curtailment and SWCAA asks that you burn as clean as possible.

For Cowlitz and Lewis County a burn ban is not in effect. However, residents are encouraged not to burn due to increasing pollution levels.

“We are hopeful that calling this Air Quality Advisory and Stage I burn ban will moderate ambient levels of fine particulate matter until a more active weather system moves in,” said Uri Papish, executive director for the agency. “We are not asking anyone to go without heat, but to use an alternative source of heat if possible until weather patterns change and our air quality returns to healthy levels.”

Current air quality information is available on the web:

<http://www.swcleanair.org/burning/airquality.asp>

The Air Quality Index rates air quality based on labels of “good” (0 to 50, green), “moderate” (51 to 100, yellow), “unhealthy for sensitive groups” (101-150, orange), and “unhealthy” (151-200, red), and “very unhealthy” (201 to 300, deep red). Any reading above 300 is “hazardous.” Smoke levels (PM_{2.5}) levels are expected to reach into the “unhealthy” range throughout Southwest Washington.

While residents can view current air quality conditions at <http://www.swcleanair.org>, SWCAA’s monitoring network does not capture air quality conditions in all communities. For this reason, it’s important for residents to gauge air quality conditions where they live and take appropriate actions to protect themselves. Remember, local smoke levels can rise and fall rapidly, depending on weather factors including wind direction.

Smoke inhalation can cause a range of health problems:

- Chest pain
- Fast heartbeat
- Coughing
- Stinging eyes
- Asthma attack
- Trouble breathing
- Irritated sinuses
- Headaches

Sensitive groups should take precautions, including: children, older adults, and people that are pregnant, have heart or lung issues (such as asthma and COPD), or that have had a stroke.

- Stay indoors when possible.
- Limit your physical activity outdoors, such as running, bicycling, physical labor, and sports.
- Close windows in your home, if possible, and keep the indoor air clean. If you have an air conditioner, use the "recirculation" switch. Use an indoor air filter if available.
- Avoid driving, when possible. If you must drive, keep the windows closed. If you use the car's fan or air conditioning, make sure the system recirculates air from inside the car; don't pull air from outside.
- Schools and daycare providers should consider postponing outdoor activities or moving them indoors.
- N95 or N100 rated masks can help protect some people from air pollution. These masks are usually available at hardware and home repair stores. Please check with your doctor to see if this appropriate for you.

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/334-353.pdf>.

- For more information on ways to reduce your exposure, see the Washington Department of Health's web site:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/AirQuality/SmokeFromFires>

As always, consult with your health care provider for more specific questions and concerns.

Visit the Washington Smoke-Blog for more detailed information: <http://wasmoke.blogspot.com/>

For weather information visit the National Weather Service website at: www.nws.noaa.gov

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