

Air Quality Expected to Decline due to Stagnant Weather

VANCOUVER, Wash. – A Stage One Burn Ban is being called for Lewis & Cowlitz Counties effective 5 p.m. today and continuing at least through Monday. Due to a high pressure system building over the Pacific Northwest the National Weather Service (NWS) has issued an Air Stagnation Advisory affecting Cowlitz and Lewis counties in SWCAA jurisdiction and adjacent areas to the north.

Under a Stage 1 Ban, all outdoor burning is prohibited, even in areas where outdoor burning is not permanently banned, and no burning is allowed in fireplaces or uncertified wood stoves. Those with no other source of adequate heat for their homes are exempt.

Stagnant weather conditions coupled with cold overnight temperatures can cause air pollution levels to climb enough to raise concerns about impaired air quality and its impacts on health. These conditions may briefly improve each afternoon but overnight inversions and stagnation are expected to inhibit overall clearing. A change in weather will be needed to significantly improve ventilation and mixing, but that's not forecast to occur before early Tuesday morning.

These curtailments occur in two progressive stages as needed:

Stage 1: Outdoor burning and the use of all fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves and inserts is banned when pollution is forecasted to reach unhealthy levels. Uncertified units are typically older than 1990 and lack a certification label on the back of the unit.

Stage 2: All wood burning is prohibited, including certified home heating units, when the Stage 1 curtailment has not reversed the increasing pollution trend and weather conditions still indicate a high risk for exceeding air quality health standards.

The objective of this Stage 1 curtailment is to prevent exceeding the federal health-based
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standard for fine particle pollution. Although fine particle pollution levels may decrease some during the day, on cold nights with little or no wind, wood smoke pollution can accumulate to levels that are considered unhealthy. Fine particles released by smoke from outdoor burning, wood stoves, and fireplaces are of concern because they can reach deep into the lungs. Episodes of high fine particle pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause difficulty breathing and make lung and heart problems worse. The Southwest Clean Air Agency encourages residents to postpone their outdoor burning projects until favorable weather patterns return. We are not asking anyone to go without heat, but to use an alternative source of heat if possible until our air quality returns to healthy levels.

To sign up to receive e-mail notifications of these wood stove curtailment burn bans, visit www.swcleanair.org.

Founded in 1968, the mission of the Southwest Clean Air Agency is to preserve and enhance the air quality in southwest Washington. Serving the counties of Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum, SWCAA is responsible for protecting the public's health through the enforcement of federal, state and local air quality standards and regulations.

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For more information contact:

Randy Peltier, Operations Manager
Southwest Clean Air Agency
360-574-3058 or 1-800-633-0709

News Release: Air Quality Suffers from Stagnant Weather

Distributed on Tuesday, October 19, 2010 to the following:

All SWCAA Employees

Lewis County Media:

Doug Adamson, KELA - dougadamson@bicoastalmedia.com

Steve Mohny, KITI - mohny@live95.com

Sharyn Decker - sdecker@chronline.com

Brian Mittge - bmittge@chronline.com

Anthony Barnack, DEQ - BARNACK.Anthony@deq.state.or.us

Susan Drake, DEQ - drake.susan@deq.state.or.us

William Knight, DEQ - KNIGHT.William@DEQ.STATE.OR.US

DNR Dispatch - PCdispatch@dnr.wa.gov

Russ Hovey, DNR - russ.hovey@dnr.wa.gov

Lewis County Emergency Services - dem@lewiscountywa.gov

Tyree Wilde, National Weather Service - tyree.wilde@noaa.gov

WA-AQ-HEALTH-BURN-BANS@listserv.wa.gov

Lewis County Board Members:

Dan Henderson – Hubcitydan@gmail.com

Bill Schulte – Bill.schulte@lewiscountywa.gov

Lewis County Fire Chiefs:

Jim Walkowski - jwalkowski@riversidefire.net

Kelvin Johnson - kjohnson@ci.chehalis.wa.us

Lewis Co. Fire District 10 Packwood - lcf10@lewiscounty.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 15 Winlock - lewis15@quik.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 17 Big Creek - lcf17@hotmail.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 2 Toledo - tolfire2@toledotel.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 4 Morton - lcf4@lewiscounty.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 5 Napavine - chief5100@lcfpd5.com

Lewis Co. Fire District 7 Vader - seven@tdn.com

SWCAA E-mail List Serv Subscribers