

Stage 1 Burn Ban Being Declared for Clark County

The use of fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves will be prohibited until the outlook for air quality improves. Households without an adequate alternative heat source are exempted.

VANCOUVER, Wash. – The Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) is issuing a Stage 1 Burn Ban for all of Clark County effective immediately Tuesday, December 2, 2014 until further notice. A high pressure system moved into the area over the weekend and is forecast to remain until a low pressure system moves in, possibly on Thursday. Cold evening temperatures combined with stable weather patterns are expected to cause already elevated fine particle pollution levels to continue to increase. The ban will continue until weather patterns improve and fine particle pollution returns to healthy levels. Evening-to-morning inversions followed by limited daytime ventilation and dispersion are forecast to elevate already high fine particle pollution levels over the next couple of days. This wintery stable weather pattern combined with elevated fine particle levels means that the use of all fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves and inserts is prohibited. All outdoor burning is also prohibited during this Stage 1 Burn Ban. **If wood burning is your only adequate source of heat, you are exempt from this ban. We ask that you burn as clean as possible. Proper burning should produce no visible smoke from your chimney.**

These curtailments occur in two progressive stages as needed:

Stage 1: 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.

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Stage 2: All wood heating is prohibited, including certified 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.

“We are hopeful that calling this Stage 1 curtailment will prevent us from exceeding the federal health-based standard for fine particle pollution,” said Uri Papish, Executive Director for the agency. Papish went on to say that “although we may see these fine particle pollution levels decreasing by some amount during the day, on cold evenings with little or no wind, wood smoke pollution can accumulate to levels that are considered unhealthy. Fine particles released by smoke from wood stoves, fireplaces and other burning are of concern because they can reach deep into and remain in the lungs. Episodes of high fine particle pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause difficulty breathing and make lung and heart problems worse. 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. The fine particles that can reach deep into our lungs are individually invisible to the human eye which is why there is concern over a smoking chimney that is releasing very high concentrations of lung penetrating particles.”

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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