



Winter 2009

# Clean Air News

"To preserve and enhance air quality in southwest Washington"

## Tips for Cleaner Wood Burning

- Only burn dry, seasoned wood. Be sure your firewood has been split and dried for at least one year.
- Never burn wet, painted, stained or treated wood, color newsprint, plastic, garbage, diapers or magazines. Items such as these produce high amounts of odor, smoke and toxic fumes. Burning these materials is illegal and also an excellent way to start a chimney fire.
- Store your firewood under cover. A shed or shelter is best. If you use a plastic tarp, allow ventilation to prevent condensation.
- Burn small, hot fires. This helps the wood burn completely and cleanly.
- Never allow the fire to smolder. Smoldering fires are the worst pollutants because they burn at a temperature too low for efficient combustion. The result is more smoke—unburned wood going up the chimney, wasted.
- Do not damper too much. Allow enough air for the wood to burn fully, without smoldering. Never try to keep the fire going overnight by cutting back the air supply. This wastes wood, produces lots of smoke and creosote and produces little heat.
- Step outside and look at the plume from your chimney. You should see only heat waves. If you can see smoke, your wood is not burning completely. Increase the air supply to your fire.
- Do not burn in moderate weather. Your stove may overheat your house. You will want to close the dampers to cut back on the heat, which cuts oxygen to the fire, wastes wood and increases pollution.
- Do not install a wood stove until you have considered other ways to cut heating costs. Insulating and weather stripping can cost less than a wood stove and will reduce your heating requirements, whether your heat source is wood, oil, gas or electricity.

## Wood Stove Curtailments: What You Need to Know for this Heating Season

In cooler weather, the smell of wood smoke wafts from chimneys in many of our neighborhoods. While some may like the smell, wood smoke is a serious public health concern. The Southwest Clean Air Agency may need to call upon residents who have another source of heat to temporarily cease wood burning to reduce levels of fine particle pollution.

On cold nights with little or no wind, wood smoke pollution can accumulate to levels that are considered unhealthy. Fine particles released as smoke from wood stoves, fireplaces and other burning 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 aggravate lung and heart problems.

In years past, the Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) has asked southwest Washington residents to *voluntarily* limit wood burning during Air Pollution Advisories. However, recent revisions to Washington state law now require that when levels of fine particle pollution are forecasted to reach unhealthy levels, SWCAA must notify Washington residents to curtail wood burning activities and use an alternative source of heat if they have one. These *mandatory*, temporary wood burning curtailments exempt residents whose only source of heat is burning wood.

When poor air quality conditions are widespread enough to impact southwest Washington, the Southwest Clean Air Agency will issue mandatory Stage 1 or Stage 2 wood burning curtailments for Washington residents.

"SWCAA will be urging southwest Washington residents to comply with these wood burning curtailments," said Bob Elliott, executive director of the clean air agency. "Reducing the area's wood smoke is vital to keeping our air quality in compliance with federal health-based standards."

These curtailments will likely come in two progressive stages:

**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 1993 and lack a certification label on the back of the unit.

**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.

These wood stove curtailments will not apply to homes with no other source of adequate heat. All outdoor burning is also banned during these burn bans. If the air quality forecast is exceptionally bad and air pollution levels are expected to rise very rapidly, SWCAA may need to call a Stage 2 curtailment without first calling a Stage 1.

To sign up to receive e-mail notifications of these wood stove curtailment burn bans, visit [www.swcleanair.org](http://www.swcleanair.org).

PAID  
US POSTAGE  
PRESRT STD  
ADDRESS MEDIA

Southwest Clean Air Agency  
11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294  
Vancouver, WA 98682



## Wood Stove Change-Out Program Helping Vancouver

Earlier this year the Southwest Clean Air Agency received a grant of \$260,000 to replace old, uncertified wood stoves with new, cleaner-burning units for some Vancouver residents. This program is important because older wood stoves tend to be high air polluting devices and are used for many years.

The response to this replacement program has been very encouraging and we are pleased to announce that as of December, 51 households were already enjoying their new units. About a third of program participants have chosen to replace their old units with pellet stoves, a significantly cleaner alternative to wood stoves. Many other households are either in the application process or in the midst of purchasing or installing the new, certified clean burning units.



"We are hopeful that by this great response, we can get more funding to fund even more replacements next year," said Bob Elliott, executive director at SWCAA. "Reducing the wood smoke in this high density area is vital for protecting public health and for staying in compliance with federal standards for air pollution."

While there is currently a wait list for the remaining funds, people are welcome to call the agency at 360-574-3058 to find out if they are eligible for this program.

## Southwest Clean Air Agency

### SOUTHWEST CLEAN AIR AGENCY

Bob Elliott, Executive Director  
11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294  
Vancouver, WA 98682  
Phone: 360-574-3058  
Fax: 360-576-0925  
[www.swcleanair.org](http://www.swcleanair.org)

### BOARD MEETINGS

When: First Thursday of every month  
Where: SWCAA offices  
Contact: 360-574-3058

### CLARK COUNTY OUTDOOR BURN INFORMATION

Contact: 360-574-3058, ext. 6

### BURN INFORMATION - OTHER COUNTIES

Contact: 1-800-633-0709

### NEWSLETTER

Kathy Finkle, Editor

For questions or comments regarding this newsletter, call 360-574-3058, ext. 39 or e-mail [kathy@swcleanair.org](mailto:kathy@swcleanair.org)



Printed on recycled paper

## Cleaner School Buses

In 2003 the Washington state legislature provided funding to clean up school buses statewide. This program has enabled the Southwest Clean Air Agency to install more than 650 diesel oxidation catalysts on school buses throughout southwest Washington. The use of these retrofit devices, in combination with ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel, can reduce particulate matter emissions by more than 90 percent.

SWCAA is also working to install Crankcase Ventilation Systems (CCVs) on buses to improve air quality inside the buses for children and drivers on buses. So far more than 200 buses have been fitted with CCVs in southwest Washington. Diesel multi-stage filters are also being installed in some buses to further reduce particulate emissions.

"With asthma rates on the rise and children being more vulnerable to air pollution, we expect these retrofits to provide good health benefits for years to come," said

Bob Elliott, executive director for Southwest Clean Air Agency.

A new program from the Washington Department of Ecology is funding the full replacement of eight very old school buses in southwest Washington. This money will help some of the school districts replace their older, most-polluting diesel school buses which could not be fitted with pollution control equipment. Across the state, 34 buses will be replaced with new ones through this program.



Illustration by Amy  
Ordway Elementary  
Bainbridge Island School  
District