

DON'T LIGHT TONIGHT

Don't Light Tonight is a voluntary wintertime air pollution reduction program.

On winter nights when air pollution is approaching unhealthy levels, the Air District asks residents in specific, affected areas to refrain from building a wood fire for 24 hours.

Does the program apply to my gas insert?

Because natural gas inserts are virtually free of particulate matter emissions, curtailment requests are only for residents with wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.

Why is wood smoke a problem?

Winter weather conditions such as fog can trap the toxic particles in wood smoke at ground level. These unhealthy particles can hover in the air, posing a health risk to people and animals long after the fire goes out. Breathing these particles can reduce lung function, especially in children; aggravate heart conditions and lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema, pneumonia and bronchitis; irritate eyes, throat, and sinuses; and, even at low levels, trigger headaches and allergies.

Can one fireplace really make a difference?

Due to winter meteorological conditions, smoke collects in localized, concentrated pockets. This means that the smoke from just one fire can cause a significant problem for the entire neighborhood. Because airborne particles take time to settle, the problem intensifies quickly. Additionally, smoke particles are so tiny that they seep into homes despite closed doors and windows. Even in homes where wood is not burned, indoor wood smoke pollution can reach up to 70 percent of the outdoor level. Neighbors of wood burners may be breathing unhealthy particles, even if they are not using their own wood-burning fireplaces or stoves.

I don't light it often, but I don't want to give up my wood fire completely.

The District is only asking that you voluntarily postpone having a wood fire on the few evenings when air quality is at its worst and weather conditions will trap the smoke at low levels. No one is asking you to give up your warm, cozy fire; just save it for special occasions.

When you light, please do it right:

Install a natural gas insert or appropriately sized EPA-certified wood or pellet stove

Never burn trash, newspapers, magazines, or painted wood in your fireplace

Build small, hot fires instead of large smoldering ones and give your fire a generous air supply

Use only dry, seasoned wood

Plan ahead -- buy green wood in early spring so it will season by winter

And remember to have your chimney periodically inspected and cleaned professionally for your family's safety and your peace of mind

By cooperating with an occasional Don't Light Tonight request, everyone can make a significant contribution to improving air quality.