



SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT PRESS RELEASE

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New Wood Smoke Forecasting Techniques Will More Precisely Predict Check Before You Burn Days This Season

DIAMOND BAR—The South Coast Air Quality Management District’s (South Coast AQMD) 8th annual Check Before You Burn season is officially underway. This year will see the start of improved forecasting techniques that will help determine when and where residential wood burning must be curtailed due to meteorological conditions that could aggravate air quality.

“In addition to improved forecasting methods, residents also play an important role in improving air quality, especially during fall and winter by checking before they burn,” said Wayne Nastri, South Coast AQMD’s Executive Officer, “When residents are aware of and comply with no-burn days, then together we can improve the air quality in our region.”

South Coast AQMD’s meteorologists have been hard at work over the past year to further improve their accuracy on predicting high levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), which are tiny particles in the air that can lodge deep into the lungs and pose health concerns. Smoke from residential fireplaces is a significant source of PM_{2.5} during the winter months in the South Coast Air Basin.

South Coast AQMD was able to develop a forecast model to predict wood smoke particulate concentrations for several days in advance using a wood smoke tracer with forecasted weather data and date information such as holidays and burning patterns for specific days of the week. Not only will this new modeling improve wood smoke predictions, it will also lead to more accurate PM_{2.5} forecasts and predictions of ‘No Burn’ days throughout the season.

South Coast AQMD’s forecasters call for Residential ‘No Burn’ days when PM_{2.5} in the air is expected to reach unhealthy levels due to air emissions and stagnant weather conditions. A No-Burn Day is a 24-hour ban on wood-burning in residential fireplaces, stoves or outdoor fire pits across the South Coast Air Basin. South Coast AQMD’s no-burn alerts do not apply to mountain communities above 3,000 feet in elevation, the Coachella Valley, or the High Desert. Homes that rely on wood as a sole source of heat, low-income households and those without natural gas service also are exempt from the requirement. Gas and other non-wood burning fireplaces are not restricted. There were 13 No-Burn Days called last winter, and 33 the previous season.

The seasonal air pollution prevention program extends from Nov. 1 through Feb. 29, 2020. During this four-month period, residents living in the South Coast Air Basin, including all of Orange County and the non-desert areas of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, are asked to help improve Southern California's air quality by not burning firewood on 'No-Burn' Days.

Wood-burning can emit more than five tons of harmful PM2.5 emissions per day in the South Coast Air Basin. This is more than three times the amount of PM2.5 emitted from all of the power plants in the Southland.

Short-term exposure to unhealthy levels of particulate matter can cause throat and eye irritation, aggravate asthma and trigger other respiratory conditions. Exposure over an extended period of time can increase the risk of strokes, heart attack or cancer.

To improve our air quality and strive for healthier communities, South Coast AQMD asks residents to Check Before You Burn by signing up for Air Alerts at www.AirAlerts.org to receive an email notification in advance of every No-Burn Day. Residents can also call (866) 966-3293 for daily Check Before You Burn information.

About Check Before You Burn

[Check Before You Burn](#) is South Coast Air Quality Management District's late fall and early winter program that became mandatory on Nov. 1, 2011, under the provisions of South Coast AQMD's Rule 445 – Wood-Burning Devices. The campaign seeks to educate residents of the South Coast Air Basin about the hazards of wood smoke and prohibits burning of firewood in a fireplace, stove or outdoor fire pit on No-Burn Days, when unhealthy air quality is forecast. While air quality has improved dramatically in recent decades, Southern California still has some of the worst air pollution in the nation.

South Coast AQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties, including the Coachella Valley. For news, air quality alerts, event updates and more, please visit us at www.aqmd.gov, download our award-winning [app](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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