

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM THE
CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

To: County Clerks for the Counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino; and Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation – State Clearinghouse	From: South Coast Air Quality Management District 21865 Copley Drive Diamond Bar, CA 91765
---	---

Project Title: Proposed Amended Rule 445 – Wood-Burning Devices

Project Location: The proposed project is located within the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (South Coast AQMD) jurisdiction, which includes the four-county South Coast Air Basin (all of Orange County and the non-desert portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties), and the Riverside County portion of the Salton Sea Air Basin and the non-Palo Verde, Riverside County portion of the Mojave Desert Air Basin.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: Rule 445 limits particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) emissions from residential wood combustion by prohibiting the burning of products not intended for use as fuel, prohibiting the sale of unseasoned wood, and mandating the curtailment of wood burning on "No-Burn" days when ambient PM_{2.5} concentration is forecast to exceed a threshold limit during the wood-burning season (beginning of November through the end of February). The primary objective of Proposed Amended Rule 445 (PAR 445) is to comply with the federal Clean Air Act Most Stringent Measure (MSM) requirements for the 2012 PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) and to implement Control Measure BCM-18: Further Emissions Reductions from Wood-Burning Fireplaces and Wood Stoves, of the South Coast Air Basin Attainment Plan for the 2012 Annual PM_{2.5} Standard (PM_{2.5} Plan). PAR 445 will lower the mandatory wood-burning curtailment threshold from 29 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³) to 25 µg/m³. The proposal will also remove the existing low-income exemption and include other updates such as removing outdated provisions, allowing reconstruction of wood-burning devices damaged or destroyed due to a natural disaster, aligning enforcement practices consistent with other South Coast AQMD rules, correcting references, and improving clarity. Implementation of PAR 445 is anticipated to benefit public health and ambient air quality by reducing PM_{2.5} emissions by 0.25 ton per annual average day as well as reducing emissions of other criteria pollutants and hazardous air pollutants.

Public Agency Approving Project:
South Coast Air Quality Management District

Agency Carrying Out Project:
South Coast Air Quality Management District

Exempt Status:

CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption

CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt: South Coast AQMD, as Lead Agency, has reviewed the proposed project pursuant to: 1) CEQA Guidelines Section 15002(k) – General Concepts, the three-step process for deciding which document to prepare for a project subject to CEQA; and 2) CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 – Review for Exemption, procedures for determining if a project is exempt from CEQA. Since lowering the curtailment threshold and removing the low-income exemption to comply with the federal Clean Air Act MSM requirements for the 2012 PM_{2.5} NAAQS and Control Measure BCM-18 of the PM_{2.5} Plan will not result in physical modifications, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed project may have a significant adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) – Common Sense Exemption. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308 – Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment, because PAR 445 is intended to further protect or enhance the environment by improving public health and air quality through anticipated reductions in PM_{2.5}, other criteria pollutants, and hazardous air pollutants. Further, there is no substantial evidence indicating that any of the exceptions to the categorical exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 – Exceptions, apply to the proposed project.

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM CEQA (concluded)

Date of Project Approval:

South Coast AQMD Governing Board Public Hearing: September 5, 2025

CEQA Contact Person:

Sina Taghvaei, Ph.D.

Phone Number:

(909) 396-2192

Email:

staghvaei@aqmd.gov

PAR 445 Contact Person:

Ashley Dang

Phone Number:

(909) 396-3328

Email:

adang@aqmd.gov

Date Received for Filing: _____

Signature:



September 5, 2025

Kevin Ni

Program Supervisor, CEQA

Planning, Rule Development, and
Implementation