



From the AIR PROGRAM



Wood Stove Safety Tips

If you smell smoke inside your home, then harmful air pollutants are present. Wood smoke contains a mixture of air pollutants, including microscopic particles. Studies show that this particle pollution can significantly harm the lungs and heart.

1. CHIMNEY & PIPE. According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating equipment (including wood stoves) is the second leading cause of home fires. Further, the leading factor contributing to fires from home heating (30%) was due to having a dirty chimney (i.e., creosote buildup). A clean chimney provides good draft for your wood-burning appliance and reduces the risk of a chimney fire. Have your chimney cleaned & inspected by a professional at least bi-annually (EPA recommends annually). You can also get some creosote conditioner/remover from your local hardware store; READ the instructions carefully or ASK the vendors about it. Pictured: Imperial Creosote Conditioner available at Manor True Value.



2. BURN THE RIGHT WOOD. Not all wood is the same. Burn dry, seasoned wood to reduce particle pollution. Split wood dries much faster. Softwoods, such as Douglas fir, need six months to dry. Hardwoods like oak need at least 12 months. Never burn garbage, plastic, treated lumber, or driftwood-- they emit toxic fumes and particles. Wet wood is a problem for your health and your pocketbook. It creates a lot of smoke and burns inefficiently, meaning the potential heat literally goes up in smoke. You can buy a basic moisture meter (\$20-\$40) at a hardware store or online to test the wetness of your wood before burning. Split the wood and test the newly split side of the wood for an accurate reading. The guideline is that wood should only be burned indoors for heat if the moisture content is 20% or less. 30% is considered basically saturated. Typically in our area, especially in the fall and early winter, wood is dry. The times to check are after storms, or when wood is stored with low airflow in damp areas. Learn how to check your wood for moisture in this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo1--Zrh11s>).

Pictured: left: Tom Gustie testing a log with a Delmhorst moisture meter. (the log was about 10%). Right: a small 1-yr cut conditioned branch stored in the shade, at about 7% moisture, with a green light showing the “readiness” of this wood to burn!



For more wood stove info contact the Air Program 873-7845

BURN INFO

The Air Program thanks everyone who has renewed and followed the rules of their burn permits this year. (Permits are good for the year until Dec 31st.) Please come in or call in to renew your permit in January!

Permits are required for outdoor burning. Available at Air Program at EMO-A (or Environmental staff at EMO-B).

Why must outdoor burns be OUT BY NOON? In the Owens Valley, the winds typically pick up in the afternoon, making it possible for even a small fire to get out of control. In addition, if you put your fire out by noon, but have a flare up, it will happen during daylight hours when you can more easily manage it.

Why are some calm days “NO” burn days? Sometimes, this happens when barometric pressure is high, and we get cold, clear days when the smoke stays around. You can identify them by looking out your window. The smoke from your neighbor’s wood-stove will be streaming out horizontally. This means that the smoke tends to hang around for you to breathe. So these “no” burn days are designed to keep the air cleaner and healthier.

Why does the statewide burn suspension (“ban”) during summer-fall last so long? For the same reasons as above, CalFire waits until fuel moisture levels have dropped to where they are “safe” for outdoor burns on a larger scale, as escaped fires are expensive and dangerous.