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September 20, 1990

PRESS RELEASE

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As we approach fall, and cooler weather, the Southwest Air Pollution Control Authority would like to remind those who heat with wood of the hazards of wood smoke and the regulations governing fireplaces and woodstoves.

Wood smoke contains a complex mixture of toxic organic compounds, some of which are known to be mutagenic or cancer causing. Therefore, great care should be given when heating with wood.

Some things you should know about the law:

1) It is the responsibility of each wood burner to be informed of air quality conditions and burning restrictions. Information about wood burning is available by calling the Southwest Air Pollution Control Authority at 574-3058 or 1-800-633-0709, or calling the Washington Department of Ecology Woodstove Information Line at 1-800-523-4636. Current information will also be provided to the newspapers, radio and television stations throughout the region.

2) Effective July, 1990, smoke emissions from the chimneys of All stoves and fireplaces are not allowed to exceed 20% opacity. Opacity is measured on a scale of 0-100, and is based on the percent a plume of smoke obscures the background behind it. A 0% reading is basically "no visible smoke", while at 100% opacity nothing is visible behind the plume of smoke.

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PRESS RELEASE - Wood Heating (cont.)  
September 10, 1990

A good hot fire of seasoned wood will enable you to meet this opacity limit, but be sure your chimney is clean, with minimum creosote buildup. Seasoned firewood needs to contain less than 20% moisture. To allow your firewood to "season", it should not be burned for at least 6 months after it has been split. If you are not sure of how long it has been since the wood was split, take one of the larger pieces of wood and split it. If you can feel or see moisture, it is not well seasoned.

3) Only untreated, well-seasoned, dry firewood should be burned. It is illegal to burn household garbage, plastics, rubber products, paints, waste petroleum products, painted or treated wood (including utility poles, railroad ties, plywood and pressboards). Burning of these materials not only releases undesirable compounds into the air, but also increases creosote buildup and the potential for a chimney fire.

4) When air pollution starts to build up, the Southwest Air Pollution Control Authority may call an impaired air quality episode. Burning in a wood heating device would be banned during these times, unless you are registered as having no other source of adequate heat.

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