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Subject: News Release: Stage 1 Burn Ban Now in Effect for Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis Counties
Date: Thursday, December 30, 2010 10:12:11 AM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 30, 2010

Stage 1 Burn Ban Now in Effect for Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis Counties

The use of fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves is prohibited until air quality improves. Households without an alternative heat source are exempted.

VANCOUVER, Wash. – The Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) is issuing a Stage 1 Burn Ban, effective immediately until further notice for all of Clark, Cowlitz and Lewis Counties, due to elevated levels of fine particulate pollution, a consequence of persistent air stagnation. This means that the use of all fireplaces, uncertified wood stoves and inserts is prohibited until air quality improves and the Stage 1 Burn Ban is lifted. If burning wood is your only source of heat, you are exempt and we ask that you burn as clean as possible. All outdoor burning is also prohibited during this Stage 1 Burn Ban.

Air quality forecasters expect the stagnation may continue through Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2011. If air quality continues to deteriorate, SWCAA may have to issue a Stage 2 Burn Ban which would prohibit all wood burning, including fireplaces, certified wood stoves, inserts and pellet stoves. Again, if this is your sole source of heat, you are exempt from these burn bans.

For the most current information or to sign up to receive e-mails about wood stove curtailments, visit our website at www.swcleanair.org. For more information about cleaner wood burning techniques, visit www.swcleanair.org/burnclean.html.

“Clark County is already experiencing a high level of air pollution from wood burning, and pollution levels are rising in Cowlitz and Lewis Counties as well,” said Jackie Brown, air quality specialist. “We are not asking anyone to go without heat, but to use an alternative source of heat if possible until our air quality improves.”

On cold nights with little or no wind, wood smoke pollution can accumulate to levels that are considered unhealthy. Fine particles released by smoke from wood stoves, fireplaces and other burning are of concern because they can reach deep into the lungs. Episodes of high fine particle pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause difficulty breathing and make lung and heart problems worse.

These curtailments occur in two progressive stages as needed:

Stage 1: The use of all fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves and inserts is banned when pollution is forecasted to reach unhealthy levels. Uncertified units are typically older than 1990 and lack a certification label on the back of the unit. Certified wood stoves and inserts are allowed during a Stage 1 Burn Ban.

Stage 2: All wood heating is prohibited, including certified units, when the Stage 1 curtailment has not reversed the increasing pollution trend and weather conditions still indicate a high risk for exceeding air quality health standards.

These curtailments will not apply to homes with no other source of adequate heat. All outdoor burning is also banned during these burn bans.

Tips for Cleaner Burning:

The most complete and effective way to reduce wood smoke pollution is to use another form

of heat. If you must use wood, or choose to do so when local rules permit, the following recommendations can help diminish the emissions from your wood stove, fireplace or fireplace insert:

- Only burn dry, seasoned wood. Be sure your firewood has been split and dried for at least one year.
- Never burn wet, painted, stained or treated wood, color newsprint, plastic, garbage, diapers or magazines. Items such as these produce high amounts of odor, smoke and toxic fumes. Burning these materials is illegal and also an excellent way to start a chimney fire.
- Store your firewood under cover. A shed or shelter is best. If you use a plastic tarp, allow ventilation to prevent condensation.
- Burn small, hot fires. This helps the wood burn completely and cleanly.
- Never allow the fire to smolder. Smoldering fires are the worst polluters because they burn at a temperature too low for efficient combustion. The result is more smoke—unburned wood going up the chimney, wasted.
- Do not damper too much. Allow enough air for the wood to burn fully, without smoldering. Never try to keep the fire going overnight by cutting back the air supply. This wastes wood, produces much smoke and creosote and produces little heat.
- Step outside and look at the plume from your chimney. You should see only heat waves. If you can see smoke, your wood is not burning completely. Increase the air supply to your fire.
- Size your wood stove properly. A stove that is too large for the space to be heated will have to be damped down, causing much smoke and wasting wood.
- Do not burn in moderate temperatures. Your stove will tend to overheat your house. You will want to close the dampers to cut back on the heat, which cuts oxygen to the fire, wastes wood and increases pollution.
- Don't install a wood stove until you have considered other ways to cut heating costs. Insulating and weather stripping can cost less than a stove and will reduce your heating requirements, whether your heat source is wood, oil, gas or electricity.
- Don't install an uncertified stove—installation of uncertified stoves is illegal. These stoves are more polluting.

The mission of the Southwest Clean Air Agency, founded in 1968, is to preserve and enhance the air quality in southwest Washington. Serving the counties of Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum, SWCAA is responsible for protecting the public's health through the enforcement of federal, state and local air quality standards and regulations.

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