

Persistent Air Stagnation Leads to a Stage 2 Burn Ban for Clark County

The use of all fireplaces, inserts, wood stoves and pellet stoves is prohibited until air quality improves. Households without an alternative source of heat are exempt.

VANCOUVER, Wash. –Due to cold weather and an extended air stagnation forecast and persistent high levels of fine particle air pollution in Clark County, the Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) is issuing a Stage 2 Burn Ban effective immediately throughout Clark County. Continued cold evenings and evening-to-morning inversions followed by limited daytime ventilation and dispersion have caused fine particle air pollution levels to rise to the federal health-based standard. These stagnant conditions are now forecast to continue into Thursday. The use of all fireplaces, wood stoves and inserts, and pellet stoves is prohibited until air quality improves and the Stage 2 Burn Ban is lifted. If wood burning is your only source of heat, you are exempt from this curtailment and we ask that you burn as clean as possible. All outdoor burning is also prohibited during this Stage 2 Burn Ban.

Air quality driven burn ban curtailments occur in two progressive stages as needed:

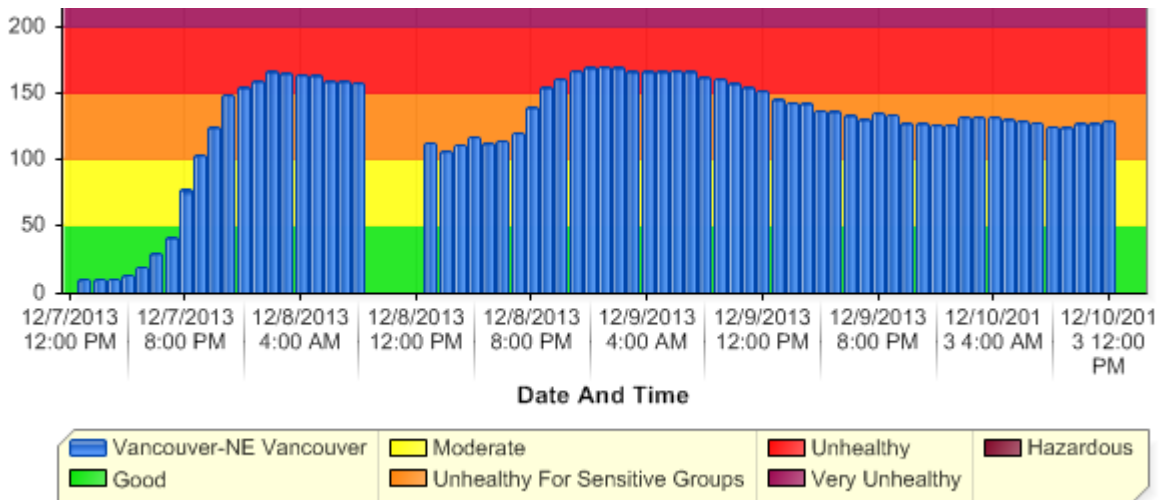
Stage 1: The use of all fireplaces and uncertified wood stoves and inserts is banned when pollution is forecasted to reach unhealthy levels. Uncertified units are typically older than 1990 and lack a certification label on the back of the unit.

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.

Overnight on Saturday December 7, 2013 the fine particulate matter levels exceeded the federal health-based ambient air quality standard because of woodstove use, stagnant air conditions, clear skies and cold evenings. The National Weather Service has forecast similar conditions for the next few days. While there has been some clearing during the day, the cold stagnant conditions in the evenings and woodstove use overnight have resulted in sustained high particulate matter levels. “We are hopeful that calling this Stage 2 curtailment will moderate ambient levels of fine particulate matter as the cold evenings, clear skies and air stagnation in Clark County continues into Thursday,” said Bob Elliott, executive director for the agency. “We are not asking anyone to go without heat, but to use an alternative source of heat if possible until weather patterns change and our air quality returns to healthy levels.”

Air pollution at the level Clark County is currently experiencing is of particular concern for people with heart and lung problems, children, and adults over 65. The [Washington State Department of Health](#) recommends that people who are sensitive to air pollution limit time spent outdoors. Fine particulate matter pollution in smoke released from wood stoves, fireplaces and other wood burning activities 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.

The purpose of a burn ban is to reduce the amount of pollution that is creating unhealthy air. The cumulative effect of each individual’s wood stove use during these cold stagnant periods can cause pollution levels to rise to unhealthy levels, even impacting those who do not already have respiratory problems. The Southwest Clean Air Agency wants to remind people who burn wood, whether occasionally or often, that it is important to always check burn ban status before lighting a fire and to obey burn bans. Again, please rely on your home’s cleaner source of heat until air quality returns to healthy levels. The chart below indicates the 1-hour average levels of particulate matter. Note that the values are at the unhealthy level.



This county wide Stage 2 Burn Ban will remain in effect until our monitors show demonstrated improvement in our air quality and weather forecasts indicate improved ventilation. To sign up to receive e-mail notifications of these burn bans or for clean burning techniques, visit www.swcleanair.org.

Founded in 1968, the mission of the Southwest Clean Air Agency 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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