

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Check Before You Burn?

From November through February, the Sac Metro Air District’s “Check Before You Burn” law, restricts wood burning when fine particle pollution (PM2.5) is forecast to be high. This restriction applies to residents and businesses in Sacramento County and the cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Rancho Cordova, and Sacramento. The program’s purpose is to **prevent** unhealthy air quality in our communities when weather conditions are expected to trap PM2.5 pollution close to the ground. Similar laws exist in the San Francisco Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley.

What are the Check Before You Burn Day Status Categories?

The Sac Metro Air District recognizes four distinct burn status categories.



- **Legal to Burn** – It is legal to burn and the use of manufactured fire logs is acceptable at this level. If you choose to burn, please follow cleaner burning tips.



- **Burning is Discouraged** – You are asked to voluntarily not burn when fine particle pollution is forecast to be 26 – 31 micrograms per cubic meter.



- **Stage 1 – No Burn Unless Exempt** – It is illegal to burn when fine particle pollution is forecast to be 32-35 micrograms per cubic meter. EPA-certified fireplace inserts or stoves or pellet stoves may be used.



- **Stage 2 – All Burning Prohibited** – All burning is prohibited in any device when fine particle pollution is forecast to exceed 35 micrograms per cubic meter. It is illegal to burn any solid fuel, including wood, manufactured fire logs and pellets.

How Can I Find Out the Check Before You Burn Day Status?

Here’s how to Check Before You Burn, or know when a “No Burn Day” is issued:

- 1) Follow the Sac Metro Air District on X (formerly Twitter) @AQMD
- 2) Visit www.AirQuality.org/CBYB
- 3) Sign up for daily Air Alert emails at www.SpareTheAir.com – input your Sacramento County zip code and mark the “Daily Air Quality Forecast” option
- 4) Call 1-877-NO-BURN-5 (1-877-662-8765)

Why is the Check Before You Burn Law Necessary?

Wood burning during the winter causes over 50 percent of the PM2.5 air pollution in Sacramento County. The purpose of Check Before You Burn is to reduce the harmful emissions from wood and other solid fuel burning to protect public health and achieve federal air quality standards. Everyone breathes unhealthy air when colder weather conditions trap pollution close to the ground.

How do These Restrictions Affect Me?

Both residents and businesses in Sacramento County must comply with the Check Before You Burn law. Make sure you Check Before You Burn to see when it is legal to burn wood, pellets, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel in an indoor or outdoor fireplace, wood stove, pellet stove, fire pit or chiminea.

Is There a Penalty for Burning Wood on No Burn Days?

Yes. First-time violations will result in a \$50 fine. First-time violators may take and pass a wood smoke awareness exam, in lieu of paying the fine. Fines for subsequent violations will be higher.

How does the Sac Metro Air District Enforce No Burn Days?

Enforcement occurs through sightings of visible smoke by enforcement staff. Inspectors respond to complaints and conduct surveillance. No one will come to your door. Typically, a photo is taken to document visible smoke and a notice of penalty and violation letter is mailed to the address where the violation was observed.

How Do I Report a Complaint or Suspected Violation?

Call the Sac Metro Air District at **1-800-880-9025** or submit a complaint online at www.AirQuality.org/Residents/Complaints.

Are There Check Before You Burn Exemptions?

Yes. The following exemptions apply to both “Stage 1 – No Burn Unless Exempt” and “Stage 2 – All Burning Prohibited” categories.

- Homes where wood burning is the sole source of heat
- Completed and approved financial hardship waiver, verified by the Air Pollution Control Officer. This waiver must be applied for and approved annually.
- Devices that operate exclusively with natural gas or propane
- Cooking devices

There is also an exemption during “Stage 1 – No Burn Unless Exempt” days if you use an EPA-certified fireplace insert or stove, or pellet-fueled device that does not emit visible smoke.

What Are the Health Effects of Breathing Wood Smoke and PM 2.5?

Fine particle pollution (PM2.5 may contain soot, smoke, metals, nitrates, sulfates, and dust. These invisible particles are so small they can enter the bloodstream. Breathing wood smoke is especially harmful for children whose lungs are still developing, older adults, and anyone with a pre-existing heart or lung condition. Long-term exposure can cause serious health problems including:

- Decreased lung function
- Aggravated asthma
- Development of chronic respiratory disease in children (asthma)
- Irregular heartbeat
- Nonfatal heart attacks
- Premature death in people with heart or lung disease
- Increased susceptibility to heart and vascular disease for post-menopausal women
- Reduced blood clotting ability

Where Can I Get More Information About Check Before You Burn?

Visit www.AirQuality.org/CBYB or contact the Sac Metro Air District at 1-800-880-9025.