SAC METRO AIR DISTRICT

CHECK BEFORE YOU BURN

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Check Before You Burn?

From November through February, Check Before You Burn restricts wood burning when fine particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) is forecast to be high, through the Sac Metro Air District's wood-burning regulation Rule 421. This law applies to residents and businesses in Sacramento County, including the cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Rancho Cordova, and Sacramento. The law reduces 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 Fransico Bay Area and San Joaquin Valley.

What Are the Check Before You Burn Day Status Categories?

The Sac Metro Air District outlines four distinct burn day status categories.

- **Legal to Burn** – When it is legal to burn, please follow cleaner burning tips.

- **Burning is Discouraged.** We ask you to voluntarily refrain from burning wood 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 if they do not emit visible smoke.

- **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 the daily burn status, or know when a "No Burn Day" is issued:

1) Follow the Sac Metro Air District (@AQMD) on X or Facebook (@Sac Metro Air District)
2) Visit www.AirQuality.org/CBYB
3) Call 1-877-NO-BURN-5 (1-877-662-8765)

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Are There Check Before You Burn Exemptions?

Yes, there are exemptions to the Check Before You Burn law. The following exemptions apply to both "Stage 1 – No Burn Unless Exempt," and "Stage 2 – All Burning Prohibited" categories.

- Completed and approved exemptions for homes where wood burning is the only source of heat. A temporary exemption may also be requested until repairs are made if your heater breaks down.
- Completed and approved exemptions for those with a financial hardship waiver, verified by the Sac Metro Air District. This waiver must be applied for and approved annually.
- Devices that operate exclusively with natural gas or propane
- Cooking devices
- On "Stage 1 – No Burn Unless Exempt" days, burning is permitted if you use an EPA-certified fireplace insert or stove, or pellet-fueled device that does not emit visible smoke.

Why is the Check Before You Burn Law Necessary?

In the winter, over 50% of the PM2.5 air pollution in Sacramento County comes from wood smoke. This smoke can worsen asthma, trigger headaches, and pose serious health risks, especially for those most at risk, including children and the elderly. The Check Before You Burn law helps reduce the harmful emissions from wood and other solid fuel burning to protect public health and achieve federal air quality standards. Wood-burning devices can make air quality unhealthy, and colder weather conditions can trap fine particle pollution close to the ground.

How Do These Restrictions Affect Me?

Residents and businesses in Sacramento County must comply with the Check Before You Burn law. On "No Burn Days," it is illegal 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, there is a penalty for burning wood on "No Burn Days." First-time violations will result in a Notice of Penalty and are subject to a $50 fine. As an alternative to paying the penalty, first-time violators may take and pass a wood smoke awareness exam. Repeat violators will be issued a Notice of Violation and are subject to fines as determined by the Sac Metro Air District Mutual Settlement Program.

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

Enforcement occurs through sightings of visible smoke by enforcement staff. Staff inspectors conduct surveillance and respond to complaints. Typically, a photo is taken to document visible smoke, and a Notice of Penalty or Notice of Violation is mailed to the address where the violation was observed. No one will come to your door.

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

Fine particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) may contain soot, smoke, metals, nitrates, sulfates, and dust. These invisible particles are so small that they can enter the bloodstream. Breathing wood smoke is especially harmful to children, whose lungs are still developing, the elderly, 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
- 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

How Do I Report a Wood Smoke 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.

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.