

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Learn to be “Burn Wise” This Winter

Reduce Fine Particle Pollution from Wood Burning to Stay Warm *and* Breathe Easier

As the final autumn leaves fall and Dane County residents begin starting the first fires of the home-heating season, the Dane County Clean Air Coalition wants to remind residents of steps they can take to reduce fine particle emissions that pollute the air. Wood smoke is made up of a mixture of gases and fine particle pollution that isn't healthy to breathe indoors or out – especially for children, older adults and those with heart disease, asthma or other lung diseases.

“Wood smoke components such as carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter, have been linked to increased risk of asthma and other health complications among children and adults with underlying health conditions. Whether the smoke comes from a fireplace or an outdoor wood boiler, it can affect members of your family and all those neighbors downwind of source, as well as contribute to overall threats to outdoor air quality,” said Dr. Thomas Schlenker, Director of Public Health for Madison & Dane County.

So far in 2009, there have been six days where a *Clean Air Action Day* alert was issued in Dane County for fine particle pollution levels that were forecast to exceed the federal health standard. While fine particle pollution can occur year-round activities such as wood burning, vehicle idling and energy use for heating and lighting that occur in the winter months tend to increase possibilities for higher fine particle levels in the air.

“Dane County just recently learned that it officially passed EPA's air quality test for fine particle pollution, but we need to continue to take steps to make sure it stays that way,” said Lisa MacKinnon, Project Coordinator for the Dane County Clean Air Coalition. “As we head into winter home heating season, we're asking residents to help us keep up the good work by reducing wood smoke pollution, which will protect residents' homes, their health and the air we all breathe, while still keeping those who use wood for heat warm throughout the winter. “

If you're burning wood this winter, you can have a cheaper, safer and healthier fire by following these tips:

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City of Madison / Dane County / Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce / Kraft Foods / Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Madison Gas & Electric Company / Madison Metropolitan School District / University of Wisconsin-Madison / Wisconsin Department of Administration
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services / Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources / Wisconsin Petroleum Council
Wisconsin Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Stores Association

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- Burn only dry, seasoned wood. It's better for the air and your wallet. Look for wood that is darker, has cracks in the end grain, and sounds hollow when hit against another piece of wood. Dry seasoned wood is more efficient at heating your home and can add up to significant savings over the winter.
- Never burn painted or treated wood or trash.
- Maintain your wood stove or fireplace and have a certified technician inspect it yearly. A certified technician can clean dangerous soot from your chimney and keep your wood stove or fireplace working properly, which reduces your risk of a home fire.
- Change to an EPA-certified wood stove or fireplace insert. These models are more efficient than older models, keeping your air cleaner, your home safer and your fuel bill lower, while keeping you warm in the winter. An estimated 12 million Americans heat their homes with wood stoves each winter, and nearly three-quarters of these stoves are not EPA certified. An EPA-certified wood stove emits nearly 70 percent less smoke than older uncertified models. Go to the EPA's *Burn Wise* website for more information: <http://www.epa.gov/burnwise/>
- If you have another source of heat, do not use your fireplace or wood stove on days that are forecast to be Clean Air Action Days for fine particle pollution.

For more air pollution reduction ideas for Dane County employers and residents, visit www.healthyardane.org.

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