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Home wood heating season officially over

The 2004/2005 Eugene/Springfield and Oakridge home wood heating advisory seasons are officially over. However, residents are asked to continue to minimize burning to help reduce the impact of smoke on their communities. The seasons run November through February.

The programs are designed to keep air quality at healthy levels as determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA has set national standards that all communities must meet. Communities that fail to meet the standards are required by law to develop strategic plans to clean up the air.

The dry, cool, stagnant weather patterns this past winter contributed to a number of days when residents were asked to curtail burning where possible. Although no “red” no-burning days were called, Oakridge residents were asked to curb burning on 37 days while Eugene/Springfield residents were asked to curb their burning on six different days.

Neither area exceeded the federal standard during the advisory season.

The 2004/2005 season was the first time since the federal government established the fine particulate standard in 2000 that the city of Oakridge did not exceed the standard at least once. LRAPA credits that at least partially to a new automated call system they began operating in Oakridge this season. On days when air quality was deteriorating and was forecast to become unhealthy for sensitive groups of people, residents received a recorded message from the agency reminding them of the yellow advisory and asking them to curtail burning if possible. Although there were 37 Oakridge yellow advisories, residents received 18 automated phone calls during the season. Residents did not receive calls on every yellow advisory, but did on those days when staff believed it was necessary to curb further deterioration of the air quality.

A follow-up evaluation survey will be conducted within the next few weeks to evaluate the community’s acceptance of the call system.

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