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Red advisory called for Oakridge - mandatory burning restrictions in place

A red home wood heating advisory has been called for Oakridge residents today, Friday, December 16th, due to forecasted poor air quality in the community. During a red advisory, no visible smoke is allowed to be emitted from a chimney without an exemption from the program. Visible smoke is considered a violation of the city's home wood heating ordinance, and may result in a \$500 fine.

"This is the first red advisory we've called for Oakridge since they adopted their city ordinance in February 2003," said Kim Metzler, of LRAPA. "The city [Oakridge] has enforcement authority over the ban."

"We expect the city will use this first episode to educate the community about the red advisory, rather than using enforcement with a large fine," Metzler said. "The goal is to keep air quality at acceptable levels."

A red advisory is called when air quality is nearing the range considered unhealthy for the general public by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). EPA has established health standards that all communities must meet. LRAPA's home wood heating advisory program is designed to help communities meet those standards.

Over the past couple days, the Oakridge area has seen a sharp rise in air pollution as a stable, stagnant air mass continues to hang over the city. Cold temperatures in the city result in an increased use of woodstoves and fireplaces. With very little air movement, the smoke concentrations build up, threatening a violation of the health standard. As a result, a red home wood heating advisory has been called.

Residents may apply for an exemption from the program if they meet economic need guidelines, or if wood is their sole source of heat. They should contact Oakridge City Hall at 782-2258 for more information.

LRAPA updates the advisory on a daily basis and provides that information to the community through a number of outlets. Residents may call a 24-hour recorded message at 746-HEAT (746-4328) to get the current advisory at any given time.

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