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### **Change of season means change of LRAPA's burning advisories**

March 1st marks the end of Lane Regional Air Protection Agency's (LRAPA) Home Wood Heating advisory season and the beginning of the regulated open burning season. The Eugene/Springfield and Oakridge home wood heating advisory season runs from November through February. The daily green, yellow, or red advisories let residents know when the use of wood stoves and fireplaces is allowed or when restrictions are needed to protect air quality. Although LRAPA will not be issuing daily advisories again until next November, residents are asked to remain cautious and minimize burning to help reduce the impact of smoke on the community.

"Even when we get spring-like weather, local air quality can still be impacted by smoke," says Sally Markos, spokesperson for LRAPA. "There is still the possibility of cold night time temperatures and stagnant air. During these periods, we are likely to see air pollution levels rise when woodstove use is high." Residents are encouraged to check the Air Quality Index at [www.lrapa.org](http://www.lrapa.org) and refrain from burning when air quality is in the moderate or unhealthy range.

March 1st also marks the beginning of the open burning season for areas where burning was restricted from November 1st through the last day of February. A recent rule change prohibited open burning within the Eugene/Springfield Urban Growth Boundary from November through February when the area experiences elevated levels of wood smoke from home wood heating and other sources. The City of Oakridge has similar restrictions.

"Generally, most residents who live outside the Urban Growth Boundary of Eugene and Springfield are allowed to burn under LRAPA rules," Markos says. "However, in some areas, such as within the city limits of Eugene and Florence, open burning is prohibited."

For this reason, LRAPA recommends residents call their local fire departments for information regarding restrictions on burning in their areas before they burn. Willamette Valley residents should always call LRAPA's open burning line, 726-3976, before burning to verify that burning is allowed on any given day. Burn advisories are also displayed for affected areas at [www.lrapa.org](http://www.lrapa.org). Coastal residents can call 997-1757 for daily outdoor burning advisories.

Residents who are allowed to burn are reminded that burning only woody yard debris generated on their own residential property is allowed, and that all fires must be out by 4:00 p.m. A first offense violation of LRAPA's open burning rules may result in a \$500 fine. More information can be found at [http://www.lrapa.org/public\\_education/backyard\\_burning\\_program.php](http://www.lrapa.org/public_education/backyard_burning_program.php).

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“LRAPA wants to remind residents that although burning might be allowed in their area, smoke from open burning exposes individuals to harmful pollutants, including particulates and air toxics. Smoke can travel quite a distance and impact large areas. The agency asks residents to dispose of debris by composting, chipping, or recycling whenever possible to avoid exposing themselves and others to harmful emissions,” Markos says.

LRAPA has seen the number of citizen complaints about backyard burning increase dramatically over the last three years. “People are becoming more aware of the health impacts from smoke and are less tolerant of open burning, even during the burning season. It’s a serious health concern for many people.” Markos says.

Residents can dispose of yard debris for a minimal charge at several collection depots, including Lane County transfer sites at Glenwood, Cottage Grove and Florence, Lane Forest Products (345-9085) and Rexius (342-1835).

Things residents can do to reduce impacts from open burning:

- \* Keep piles covered and dry until ready to burn;
- \* Burn only wood debris;
- \* Use a chipper whenever possible, and burn only what is necessary; and
- \* Burn well within the property line away from other homes.

Likewise, the Department of Forestry reminds residents to follow safety precautions to prevent backyard burn piles from escaping into wildfires. Residents are asked to:

- \* Clear a trail around the burn pile down to mineral soil;
- \* Keep a shovel and a supply of water handy at the site; and
- \* Constantly attend the burn site until the fire is completely extinguished.

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