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Contact: Sally Markos, 736-1056 ext. 217
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Local Heating Businesses Seeing Green Thanks to Recovery Act Funding from LRAPA

Local residential heating retailers are seeing more “green” in their cash registers thanks to the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency’s (LRAPA) Wood Stove Rebate Program. The program was developed by LRAPA to help homeowners in Oakridge, Eugene, Springfield, and Cottage Grove replace old wood stoves with a new, cleaner heating systems. The program provides a rebate voucher for qualified homeowners to be used toward the purchase of a new wood stove, pellet stove, or a qualified electric or gas system. Over 70 Oakridge residents have received new heating systems through the program and 175 rebate vouchers have been issued to homeowners in Eugene, Springfield, and Cottage Grove. Total funding for the program is \$471,000.

The increase in sales for participating businesses has made a big impact during a time when the economy is suffering. For most change-outs, the total cost of a new heating systems exceeds the value of the voucher by over 60%. To date, the rebates have resulted in over \$350,000 in additional sales for participating retailers. That figure could triple by the time all of the rebate vouchers are used and the program ends in December .

Matthew Clement, owner of Ambassador Piping in Springfield, is one of many program participants. “The LRAPA wood stove change-out program has been extremely beneficial in keeping our limited install crew working during the summer and we are hiring additional help for the fall and winter season. This not only benefits us, but our local community for business. Above all, it helps improve air quality, which is important to me as a father of two children with asthma. We thank LRAPA for the joint network and support,” said Clement. Other participating businesses have noted the program has kept them unusually busy in spring in summer, their slow time, and has kept cash flow positive.

LRAPA also stresses the benefits associated with the replacement of old, polluting stoves. This program is a win-win for local businesses and homeowners who have taken advantage of the discount on a new heating system. “Residents are replacing old, polluting wood stoves with cleaner-burning and more energy efficient heating systems, which also puts money in their pockets through fuel savings,” said Sally Markos, LRAPA spokesperson. “Replacing the old stoves also takes tons of pollutants out of our airshed.”

The funding, provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is being spent in communities with pollution problems caused by wood stoves. The funding came from the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE), which awarded \$2 million to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). LRAPA has been contracted by DEQ to conduct the wood stove the change-out program in Lane County. The U.S. Department of Energy administers the funds, approves the projects and reviews the state’s progress.

Although the program will end in December, 2011, some funding is still available. Homeowners are encouraged to apply now. Rebate vouchers must be used to purchase an new heating system by November 5, 2011 and the system must be installed by December 15, 2011. Application forms for the rebate program may be downloaded from the LRAPA website (LRAPA.org), picked up in person at the LRAPA office at 1010 Main Street in Springfield, or mailed by request. Interested homeowners can call LRAPA at 541-736-1056 for qualification requirements or check LRAPA.org.

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