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Lane County Media: 05-17

Home Wood Heating season begins Tuesday, Nov. 1

Lane County's mandatory home wood heating season officially starts next Tuesday, November 1, and runs through February. The season is in affect within the Eugene and Springfield Urban Growth Boundary including both cities, and city of Oakridge.

The program is in place to help keep air pollution from woodstoves and fireplaces to a minimum. Both the Eugene/Springfield area and Oakridge have wintertime air quality problems related to wood burning.

Woodstove smoke is unhealthy and contains hazardous chemical components. Studies demonstrate that wood smoke can severely impact individuals, especially those with heart or lung problems, allergies, asthma, and the elderly, pregnant women, and children.

How the program works

During the four-month season, LRAPA issues daily advisories for both communities to inform residents if burning in their woodstoves and fireplaces is allowed. A simple "red, yellow, green" advisory system informs residents of the daily advisory. A "green" advisory is called when air quality is good and burning is allowed; a "yellow" advisory is called when air quality is deteriorating and burning is cautioned against; and a "red" advisory is called when air quality is approaching unhealthy levels for sensitive groups. During a red advisory, no visible chimney smoke is allowed.

"Our air quality tends to deteriorate in the winter months when we have stagnant weather patterns - those times without much wind or rain," said Kim Metzler, LRAPA spokeswoman. "Smoke from woodstoves and fireplaces quickly builds up along the valley floor, especially when fires are allowed to smolder, or when woodstoves are damped down."

Daily burning advisories are provided to the public through a number of outlets, including the LRAPA Home Wood Heating Advisory Line at 746-HEAT (746-4328), the agency's web site at www.lrapa.org, local radio and television stations, and the Register Guard newspaper's weather page.

(More)

Clean burns minimize smoke

“To help minimize smoke we ask people to burn only clean, dry firewood. Burning wet wood provides little heat while producing a lot of excess smoke,” Metzler said. If people use manufactured firelogs, LRAPA encourages the use of products that use cleaner, less odorous binders, such as the “All Natural Firelog,” by Duraflame, which emit very little smoke. LRAPA also reminds residents NOT to “damp down” their stoves because of the excess smoke it causes.

Residents are reminded that burning excess paper, plastic and other trash in woodstoves causes excessive smoke and pollution, is illegal, and may result in a \$500 fine.

Program exemptions are available for residents who meet low-income energy assistance guidelines for Lane County. In addition, Oakridge residents may apply for exemptions if their homes are heated solely with wood. Eugene/Springfield area residents should contact LRAPA (736-1056) for an exemption; Oakridge residents need to contact Oakridge City Hall (782-2258).

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