

## **Multnomah County Considers Wood Smoke Ordinance**

*Elected officials are seeking feedback on a proposal to limit wood burning on poor air quality days in fall and winter as a way to reduce air pollution and keep people safe.*

### **Why is wood smoke a problem?**

Wood smoke is a major source of air pollution in Multnomah County. In fact, it's the primary source of small particle pollution during winter months. When the wind doesn't circulate and more people build fires, smoke hangs over our communities and makes the air unhealthy to breathe.

The fine particulates in wood smoke contribute to heart disease, lung disease and low birth weight. Children, older adults, people with health problems and people with depressed immune systems are at higher risk of being harmed by air pollution.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency sets limits on some pollutants in cities. Our area risks violating those limits for fine particulate matter, which could result in sanctions on business, industry, and individuals.

### **What solutions is Multnomah County considering?**

The EPA recommends communities like ours do three things to limit pollution from wood smoke: *outreach and education, incentives to replacing wood stoves, and rules* to reduce smoke emitted into the air.

We are educating people about when to avoid burning wood and how to burn wood cleaner if they must build a wood fire. We're also telling people about programs to help replace old stoves.

An estimated 350,000 Oregonians use wood stoves as a heat source, so we want to help people replace old wood stoves with newer, cleaner-burning devices. That can be expensive, so the county will be exploring ways to fund a program to help families offset some or all of that cost.

Finally, the county is considering passing an ordinance to reduce wood smoke on fall and winter days when air quality is poor.

### **What would the ordinance include?**

The proposed rule would prohibit people from burning wood on days forecast to have poor air quality. This would also include outdoor recreational burning.

The ordinance would exempt low-income families who use wood for their primary source of heat. It would exempt households in which their primary source of heat is temporarily not functioning. And it would exempt the use of outdoor wood fires for cooking.

Wood pellet stoves would not be included in the ordinance, which would apply from October 1 through March 1. Enforcement would be complaint-based, and would begin with outreach and education. Fines would begin on third and subsequent offenses.