

CHECK BEFORE YOU BURN

Cold weather wood smoke monitoring begins Oct. 1

Contact: Kate Yeiser, kate.yeiser@multco.us, 503-410-4524

Health officials issue wood burning advisory as Winter Wood Smoke Ordinance goes into effect Oct. 1 through March 1, burning prohibited in Multnomah County when air quality forecasted to be poor.

Health officials today are asking residents in Multnomah County to refrain from burning wood as wildfire smoke and stagnant weather risk worsening air quality in our area.

The voluntary “Yellow Day” wood smoke advisory comes as Multnomah County’s seasonal Wood Smoke Ordinance goes into effect today.

“We are just seeing numbers of particulate matter that push us just out of that good health range of air quality into moderate,” said Nadège Dubuisson, an air quality program specialist with Multnomah County Environmental Health. “We might see some clearing later in the day, but on average we expect to stay right on that edge into tomorrow.”

Advisories are issued by 11 a.m. and posted at multco.us/woodsmokestatus. Check back for updates.

Multnomah County’s winter wood smoke ordinance is in effect each year between Oct. 1 through March 1.

During these colder months, homeowners, renters and businesses in Multnomah County cannot use wood stoves, fireplaces or burn outdoors on days when the air quality is forecasted to be poor. This includes burning wood in:

- Wood stoves
- Fireplaces
- Outdoor fire pits
- Chimeneas

Wood burning is allowed for people who use wood exclusively to heat their homes and those with limited incomes. Wood stove use is also permitted during emergencies such as a power outage. And, there are no restrictions on wood or charcoal used for cooking.

Every year, Multnomah County regulates wood smoke during the cooler months because wood smoke from home heating accounts for more than half of our fine particle pollution on the average winter day. The air quality can be especially poor during days of still air and temperature inversions — when cold air is trapped close to the earth. The rule helps protect people who are most vulnerable to poor air quality — children, seniors and people with asthma and other serious breathing conditions.

This year, however, Multnomah County is also the midst of a historic wildfire season with record-breaking levels of smoke pollution and we are entering our eighth month of a global pandemic of COVID-19 that is especially harmful to people with underlying health conditions.



So health officials encourage everyone to skip all unnecessary fires this year to support neighbors with conditions that make it more difficult to breathe in less healthy air.

When breathing in smoke, COVID-19 symptoms may worsen and recovery can be more difficult. People in good health can also feel health effects from wood smoke, and may interpret those to be symptoms of COVID-19. A dry cough, sore throat, and difficulty breathing are common to both COVID-19 and smoke inhalation.

“As we spend more time this winter at home to control the spread of COVID-19, enjoying a fire is going to be especially tempting,” said Dubuisson.

“But we must remember that we are in the middle of a respiratory pandemic. Unless you have no other way to stay warm, this season we hope people will voluntarily skip the fire all together,” she said. “even on green and yellow days when the air quality is better, and help all of our more sensitive neighbors breathe a little easier.”

How it Works

From Oct. 1 through March 1, officials at Multnomah County Environmental Health will conduct daily forecasting in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Quality and the National Weather Service to identify potential poor air quality days.

When conditions suggest more pollution and an upcoming inversion (which cause air to become stagnant and trap pollutants close to the ground), Multnomah County will issue burn advisories or burn restrictions by 11 a.m. The curtailment will go into effect at noon and remain in effect for 24 hours, unless an extension is warranted.

Officials will publish all mandatory curtailment notices on the county’s [Wood Smoke website](#), share the notice through social media, including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and push out the notice on Public Alerts (sign up at bit.ly/GetAlertsForBurnRestrictions).

Residents can also sign up to receive emails on all voluntary (yellow) and mandatory (red) curtailment notices or call 503-988-0035.

On most days, a dial posted on the website will point to Green — “Air quality is good. No burn restrictions.”

On some days, the dial might show an arrow pointed to Yellow — “Air quality is moderate,” suggesting a voluntary curtailment for that day.

Rarely, when air quality and weather is very bad, that same dial will point to Red — “Air quality is unhealthy. Burn restriction.”

During a curtailment period, residents can report a suspected violation to Environmental Health by calling 503-988-0035 or emailing woodsmokecomplaints@multco.us.

If you must burn to stay warm, submit a yearly exemption application, available at www.multco.us/woodsmokestatus.

Why we need a rule

Poor air quality disproportionately affects children, seniors and people with existing health conditions. Short-term exposure to wood smoke can aggravate asthma, bronchitis and lung disease. And long-term exposure has been linked to cancer and higher rates of infant mortality.

After cars and truck emissions, residential wood smoke is the largest contributor to cancer risk from air pollution. Area wood stoves, pellet stoves, and outdoor fires account for 11 percent of total cancer risk from air pollution, while industrial emissions account for about one percent of the county's excess cancer risk from air pollution.

[View Multnomah County's air toxics and cancer risk assessment](#)

This is the third full year of Multnomah County's Wood Smoke Ordinance. Last year, officials issued 31 "Yellow Day" voluntary curtailments and one "Red Day" burn restrictions. The County received three complaints on restricted burning days, and sent those households warning letters and informational packets on the County ordinance and the health effects of wood smoke pollution. The County issued no fines.

Multnomah County's rule represents an effort to remain in compliance with federal laws even as the population grows. The Environmental Protection Agency regulates six air pollutants including particulate matter. In recent years the airshed that includes Multnomah County has come close to exceeding its limit on particulate matter 2.5. Washington County, Eugene, Medford, Klamath Falls and Pendleton have all passed similar ordinances as local jurisdictions struggle to remain in compliance with federal air pollution limits.

If you must burn, follow these steps to help reduce output of harmful wood smoke:

Burn dry, seasoned wood that has been split, stacked, covered and stored.

Test wood with a moisture meter before burning (20% moisture or less is best).

Use a cleaner-burning EPA or DEQ-certified gas or wood stove.

Burn small, hot fires. Provide sufficient air to the fire; never let it smolder.

Learn more about what you can do to reduce wood smoke at www.epa.gov/burnwise.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



#CheckBeforeYouBurn

COVID-19 can attack the lungs. Wood smoke makes it hard to breathe. Help your neighbors who are avoiding and recovering from COVID-19 symptoms by skipping your fire, if you have another way to stay warm. multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus #CheckBeforeYouBurn #COVID19

Do you use wood to heat your home and wonder if the Multnomah County winter wood smoke ordinance applies to you? There are exceptions for those who use wood exclusively for heat, have limited income, or during emergencies. multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus #CheckBeforeYouBurn

If burning wood at home is your sole source of heat, you can apply for an exemption from Multnomah County's wood smoke ordinance, in effect between October 1 and March 1, at multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus. Households with exemptions must reapply each year. #CheckBeforeYouBurn

From October 1 through March 1, it's illegal to burn wood when air quality is poor, unless you have no other option than to burn wood to stay warm. Help everyone breathe better by checking burn restrictions before burning wood at multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus. #CheckBeforeYouBurn

Have you seen @multco's advisory dials & wonder what they mean? When air quality is poor a "Yellow" (voluntary no burn) or "Red" (no burn) advisory is announced, applying to burning wood in fireplaces, woodstoves, fire pits & chimineas. multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus #CheckBeforeYouBurn

Does Multnomah County have a wood smoke pollution problem? Yes! Find out why and what the county's doing. multco.us/health/staying-healthy/wood-smoke-pollution

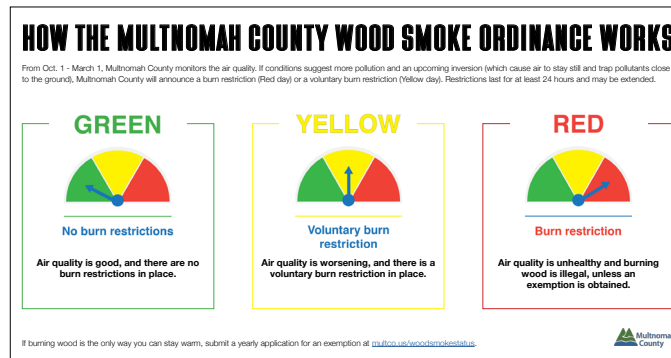
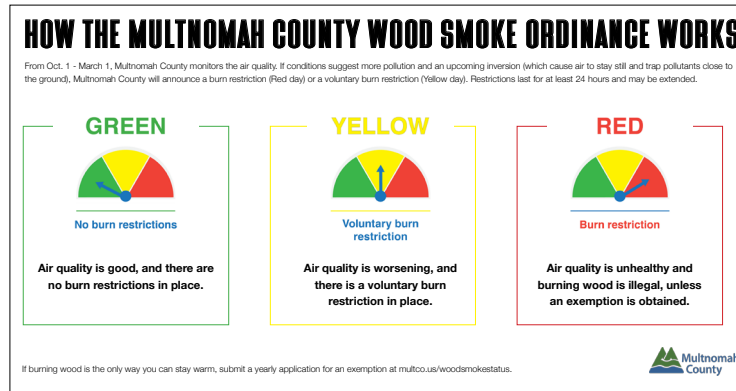
Phone? Wallet? Keys? Air quality? Add checking the burn status to your winter wood burning routine at multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus. Or, sign up for email alerts at bit.ly/CheckBeforeYouBurnAlerts so you have one less thing to remember. #CheckBeforeYouBurn

Do you build fires during the fall and winter? Get notified of when Multnomah County issues a wood burning restriction alert by signing up at bit.ly/CheckBeforeYouBurnAlerts. #CheckBeforeYouBurn

SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES

#CheckBeforeYouBurn

Have you seen @multco's advisory dials this winter and wonder what they mean? When air quality is poor, a "Yellow" (voluntary no burn) or "Red" (no burn) advisory is announced, which applies to burning wood in fireplaces, woodstoves, fire pits, and chimineas. #CheckBeforeYouBurn



SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES

#CheckBeforeYouBurn

You can help your neighbors who are avoiding and recovering from COVID-19 symptoms by skipping your fire. If burning wood is the only way you can stay warm, apply for an exemption from Multnomah County's wood smoke ordinance. multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus
#CheckBeforeYouBurn



SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES

#CheckBeforeYouBurn

From October 1 through March 1, it's illegal to burn wood when air quality is poor, unless you have no other option to stay warm. Help everyone breathe better by checking burn restrictions before burning wood at multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus. #CheckBeforeYouBurn



PRINT MATERIALS



**CHECK
BEFORE YOU BURN**

multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus

Check for winter wood burning restrictions before burning in your woodstove, fireplace, Chiminea, or outdoor pit from October 1 - March 1 of each year.

  @MultCoHealth

 503-988-0035

 Multnomah County

WINTER WOOD BURNING ORDINANCE IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY



From October 1 through March 1, homeowners*, renters*, and businesses in Multnomah County cannot use wood stoves, fireplaces, outdoor fire pits, Chimeneas or any outdoor wood burning devices on days when the air quality is considered unhealthy.

If bad air quality is expected, Multnomah County will issue a burn restriction, which will take effect by noon the same day.

*There are exceptions for households who use wood exclusively for heating, for those with limited income, and during emergencies like a power outage. There are no restrictions on wood or charcoal used for cooking.

Check wood burning restrictions before you burn:

multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus

Sign up for notifications of wood burning restrictions:

bit.ly/WoodSmokeStatus

Multnomah County
Environmental Health Services
847 NE 19th Avenue, Suite 350
Portland, OR 97232

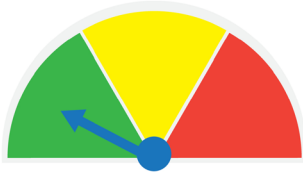
有中文

có sẵn bằng tiếng việt

Disponible en Español доступно на русском языке

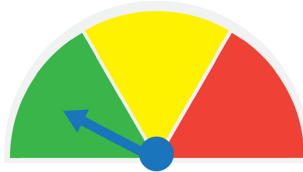
ADVISORY DIALS

GREEN



No burn restrictions

BUENO



**No hay restricciones
para quemar leña**

On most days, a dial posted on the website will point to Green — “Air quality is good. No burn restrictions.”

YELLOW



**Voluntary burn
restriction**

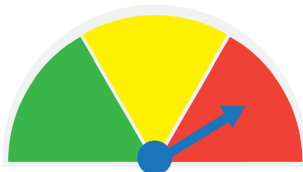
MODERADO



**Restricciones voluntarias
para quemar leña**

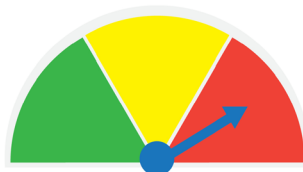
On some days, the dial might show an arrow pointed to Yellow — “Air quality is moderate,” suggesting a voluntary curtailment for that day.

RED



Burn restriction

INSALUBRE



**Restricciones en efecto
para quemar leña**

Rarely, when air quality and weather is very bad, that same dial will point to Red — “Air quality is unhealthy. Burn restriction.”

CONTACT

Media

Kate Yeiser

kate.yeiser@multco.us

503-410-4524

Air Quality Specialist

Nadege Dubuisson

nadege.dubuisson@multco.us

503-201-6126

Wood Smoke Complaints

During a curtailment period, residents can report a suspected violation to Environmental Health by calling 503-988-0035 or emailing woodsmokecomplaints@multco.us.

Alerts for Burn Restriction Notices

bit.ly/GetAlertsForBurnRestrictions

Important Links

- En Español: [Restricciones de Quema de Madera en Invierno](#)
- Wood Smoke Status: multco.us/woodsmokestatus
- Wood Smoke Pollution: multco.us/health/staying-healthy/wood-smoke-pollution
- Wood Smoke Ordinance: multco.us/file/68670/download
- Exemption Application: multco.us/woodsmokestatus



multco.us/WoodSmokeStatus