## **NEWS RELEASE**



Office of Communications
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

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## Wood Burning Tips Help Residents Burn Safely, Minimize Air Quality Impact

DENVER (or other locale) — The arrival of colder weather brings with it seasonal burning in fireplaces and wood stoves throughout Colorado. If you are able to and choose to burn, there are tips that will help you do so safely while minimizing the impact on health and air quality.

Local weather and topography contribute to temperature inversions that can trap pollutants close to the ground, particularly in valleys. Wood burning can exacerbate the problem, particularly if devices are poorly-operated, not maintained or the fuel of choice is unseasoned firewood. Excessive smoke and pungent odors may result.

Well-seasoned wood which has been stored properly and allowed to dry for several months will burn efficiently and produce little smoke. Never burn garbage, colored paper or chemically-treated wood.

Burning small, hot fires while adding only small amounts of wood as needed to keep the fire burning vigorously will reduce visible smoke and is more fuel efficient.

Stoves and fireplaces should be cleaned and inspected annually. This will prevent the buildup of creosote – a highly flammable and toxic substance that is responsible for most chimney fires.

Safety should always be a primary concern. Smoke contains many of the same pollutants as cigarettes and produces harmful carbon monoxide. Breathing wood smoke has been shown to increase cardiovascular problems, irritate lungs and eyes, and trigger headaches.

You should never smell smoke in your home. Smoke in your home indicates that your device is not operating safely or efficiently.

Burning inside the home is restricted to approved devices on certain days each November through March in the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area. The restrictions apply to the device, not the fuel (can drop this paragraph for areas outside the Front Range).

Several other areas of the state have local programs and/or rules that activate either mandatory or voluntary burning restrictions. The Western Slope Air Watch managed by the Mesa County Health Department issues twice-weekly forecasts during the winter months that may trigger mandatory restrictions within the Grand Junction city limits and voluntary restrictions elsewhere in western Colorado valleys (can modify this paragraph to meet local needs).

For further information, contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Air Pollution Control Division at 303-692-3281 (can insert local contact information here).