

## HEALTH EFFECTS OF WOOD SMOKE

Wood burning is a serious health matter that directly and adversely impacts the health of Valley residents.

During winter, smoke from residential wood burning – whether it’s in a fireplace, woodstove, pellet stove, wood-burning insert or outdoor chimineas and fire pits – puts dangerous emissions into the air.

Smoke consists of gases and fine particles that are produced when wood and other organic materials burn. The fine particles in smoke (also known as PM2.5) are microscopic and pose the biggest health risk. PM2.5 can enter the eyes and respiratory system, leading to problems like burning eyes, runny nose, bronchitis, and worsening chronic heart and lung diseases. These microscopic particles are also linked to premature deaths.

### Know Your Risk

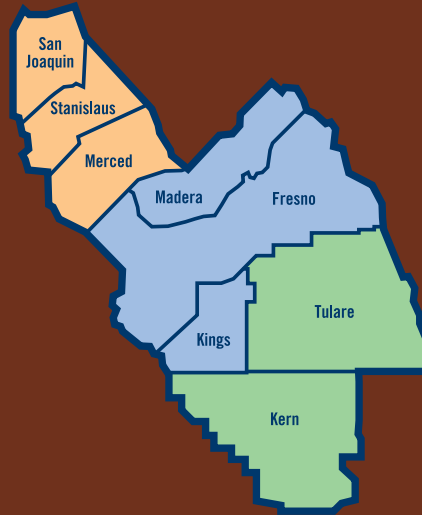
Everyone should minimize their exposure to wood smoke. However, certain groups are at higher risk for severe health effects, including:

- ▶ People with asthma and other respiratory diseases
- ▶ People with cardiovascular disease
- ▶ Children (younger than 18)
- ▶ Pregnant people
- ▶ Older adults
- ▶ Outdoor workers

If you have existing health conditions, follow your doctor’s advice for dealing with particulate matter exposure and contact them if your symptoms worsen.

Remember to always comply with the District’s Rule 4901 which regulates wood-burning fireplaces, stoves and heaters. Learn more at [valleyair.org/rule4901](http://valleyair.org/rule4901).

For more information, visit [valleyair.org](http://valleyair.org) or contact the nearest District office.



### Northern Region

*Serving San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties*  
4800 Enterprise Way, Modesto, CA 95356-8718  
Tel: 209-557-6400 FAX: 209-557-6475  
Complaint Line: 1-800-281-7003

### Central Region (Main Office)

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# MINIMIZING WOOD SMOKE & PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH



**San Joaquin Valley**  
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT®

1-800 SMOG INFO  
[valleyair.org](http://valleyair.org)

# Best Wood-Burning Practices



## By changing the way you burn wood you can save money, reduce air pollution and protect your health

Here are some wood-burning tips to help your fire burn hotter, save you money, and improve air quality in your community.

### Season all firewood

Firewood should be split, properly covered or stored, and dried/seasoned for at least 6 months. Well-seasoned wood burns more efficiently, reduces fuel usage, and minimizes smoke emissions.

### Choose the right firewood

Hardwoods are ideal for burning. Avoid burning trash or treated wood, as they can release harmful pollutants into the air.

### Start it light

Only use clean newspaper or dry kindling to start a fire. Never use gasoline, kerosene, charcoal starter, or a propane torch.

### Don't let the fire smolder

Many people believe it's best to let a fire smolder overnight, but limiting the air supply does little to improve heating and actually increases air pollution.

### Clean the ashes

Excess ashes can block the air intake vents, lowering efficiency. Make sure to dispose of ashes in a metal container, keeping it away from the house or any combustible materials to minimize the fire risk.

### Keep your chimney clean

A clean chimney ensures proper draft for your wood-burning device and lowers the risk of a chimney fire. Have a certified professional inspect your chimney once a year.

### Be a good neighbor

Follow best practices for burning wood, always adhere to state and local regulations, and check your local air quality.

### Follow instructions

Use your wood-burning device according to the manufacturer's recommended maintenance procedures.

### Upgrade to cleaner equipment

EPA-certified wood stoves and fireplace inserts burn wood more efficiently and produce less particulate pollution compared to other models. Gas inserts and heat pumps are incentivized: [valleyair.org/change-out](http://valleyair.org/change-out).

### Size matters

Select the appropriate-sized device for your space. If your wood-burning device is too large for your room or home, the fuel will smolder, leading to increased air pollution.



## Breathe easier and save money, energy, and time with these four simple steps to season your wood:

- 1 Split wood for faster drying



- 2 Stack wood split side down and away from buildings



- 3 Cover top of the stack to protect it from rain or snow



- 4 Store and dry softwood for at least 6 months and hardwood for at least 12 months.

