



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health Department Urges Residents to Minimize Smoke from Wood-burning

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Health Department is cautioning County residents who use wood-burning appliances, such as fire pits, chimineas, fireplaces and wood stoves, to minimize wood smoke emissions to help protect air quality and public health.

“With the arrival of fall and cooler weather, more people are likely to use these products for warmth indoors or outdoors,” said Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker. “However, wood smoke contains fine particulate pollution and numerous air toxics, which can be harmful to public health, especially to those suffering from asthma and other respiratory disorders. In addition, wood smoke can create a nuisance or even a health hazard for a neighbor.”

Though the best way to minimize emissions from a fire is to have no fire at all, another option is to use cleaner fuel such as natural gas or propane. But if you are burning wood, the Health Department advises following a few simple tips to stay safe and minimize the effects of wood smoke:

- Only burn clean, dry, wood – never burn garbage, debris or yard waste such as leaves.
- Keep the fire at least 15 feet away from the nearest structure, inhabited area, roadway or property line. Under certain circumstances, the distance may have to be greater to prevent smoke and odor emissions from creating a public nuisance.
- Tend the fire at all times.

Health officials suggest that people check with their municipality to see whether any local ordinance may prohibit or regulate the use of outdoor wood-burning units in their community.

Revisions are currently under consideration to County air quality regulations related to “open burning,” which is any fire from which air contaminants pass directly into the open air without passing through a flue, such as with a campfire. To read the proposed air quality changes, please visit www.achd.net/air/.

The proposed changes would restrict the materials that may be used in open burning to clean wood, propane or natural gas; limit the volume of clean wood that may be burned; institute a setback requirement of at least 15 feet from the nearest neighbor’s dwelling or inhabited area; and prohibit open burning involving wood on Air Quality Action Days. The proposal also includes a nuisance provision.

Complaints about excessive smoke and odor emissions from wood-burning equipment may be reported to the Health Department by calling **412-687-ACHD**. For more detailed information about how to burn wood safely and efficiently, while creating as little unhealthy wood smoke as possible, please visit www.achd.net/air/burning/.

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