

**Butte County**  
**Air Quality Management District**  
**AIR CARE NEWS BULLETIN**

**October 29, 2009**

**What's been happening?** At the October 22, 2009 meeting the District Board approved the voluntary **Check Before You Light** program for the period of November 1, 2009 through February 28, 2010. This program began last year and replaced the previous program called "Don't Light Tonight". The **Check Before You Light** program is voluntary and emphasizes checking the air quality status before lighting a residential wood fire at any time, not just at night. The program requests residents to voluntarily curtail using wood burning stoves and fireplaces on days forecast to have poor air quality. The program also promotes clean burning practices no matter when one burns, such as burning only seasoned wood.

The Board also received a report from staff on the final federal PM2.5 nonattainment area designation for Butte County. (PM2.5 is fine particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter. A human hair is approximately 60 microns in diameter). The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated all of the valley and much of the foothill areas in Butte County as a new federal PM2.5 nonattainment area. The District must submit a plan to EPA by 2012 showing how emissions will be lowered to meet the PM2.5 standard. Staff reported that reductions in wood smoke from residential wood burning devices will be needed to meet the standard. The public's cooperation through the voluntary measures and compliance with current regulations is therefore critical to meet this federal health based standard.

**The Check Before You Light Program:** The 2009-2010 **Check Before You Light** program focuses again on asking the public to check air quality through the various media before lighting a residential wood fire. District staff will forecast the air quality for the following day by 2 p.m. during the fall/winter seasons. The forecasts will be primarily for PM2.5 for Chico, Paradise and Gridley. District staff will issue a **Check Before You Light** advisory when the PM2.5 is forecast to reach **Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups** on the Air Quality Index scale. District staff will issue advisories using the District website, e-mail, telephone hotline, and ask the media to publish the information in the local newspapers, television and

radio. Typically the advisories affect only the Chico area, but depending on county-wide air quality, advisories could be issued for other parts of the county.

**Why is this necessary?** Wood smoke can contribute significantly to the PM2.5 pollution problem during late fall and winter months. PM2.5 pollution has been shown to contribute significantly to health problems in numerous medical studies. The residents of Butte County want healthful air, and must also have the ability to heat their homes. The District is dedicated to finding solutions to balance these interests so that our communities can meet the State and federal health-based air quality standards.

**How can I get more information?** Information on program, health studies and supporting materials are located on the District's web page at [www.bcaqmd.org](http://www.bcaqmd.org). The web page also includes tips and information on burning cleanly to reduce wood smoke pollution, and information on the stimulus tax credits to encourage replacement of old polluting wood stoves with new cleaner wood stoves. If you have questions or comments, please contact the District at 891-2882 or toll-free (888) 891-2882, or online at [www.bcaqmd.org](http://www.bcaqmd.org).

---

---

**Butte County Air Quality Management District**

**530-891-2882      [air@bcaqmd.org](mailto:air@bcaqmd.org)**

Issue 10-9