

# Butte County

## Air Quality Management District

### AIR CARE NEWS BULLETIN

September 22, 2008

**What's been happening?** Once the smoke and unhealthy air quality conditions from the numerous fires surrounding the north state in June and July at last cleared, staff got back on track to develop an enhanced public education program for residential wood burning as requested by the District Governing Board at the June 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**What's new?** Staff has prepared two staff reports with staff recommendations for Board review at the September 25<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. 1) A Public Education Program for Residential Wood Burning Devices and 2) an enhanced voluntary "Don't Light Tonight" program, now named **Check Before You Light**.

The Public Education Program for Residential Wood Burning Devices includes background information, public health issues from wood smoke, the local impacts affecting Butte County citizens, the regulatory background, recent staff outreach activities and proposed outreach activities. The staff report and proposed staff recommendations is available on the District website at [www.bcaqmd.org](http://www.bcaqmd.org) under *Wood Stoves and Fireplaces*.

The **Check Before You Light** Program (previously known as "Don't Light Tonight" proposes a pilot program focusing on the Chico Urban Area which is considered a High Smoke Impact Area. One of the consistent comments staff received during recent workshops is that on poor air quality days, woodstove and fireplace use should be voluntarily curtailed throughout the day, not just at night. For this reason the program was re-named and emphasizes checking air quality status before using wood burning devices, not just at night. The staff report and proposed staff recommendations is also available on the District website at [www.bcaqmd.org](http://www.bcaqmd.org) under *Wood Stoves and Fireplaces*. Approval for both programs will be requested at the October 23, 2008 Board meeting.

On August 18<sup>th</sup> U. S. EPA released their proposed nonattainment area designations. U. S. EPA stated their intent to designate Butte County in its entirety as a nonattainment area with the new PM 2.5 standard. The basis for the decision is incorporated in the technical support document, which is included in the Public Education Program for Residential Wood Burning Devices, Appendix C.

In December 2007 the California Air Resources Board (CARB) forwarded to U. S. EPA State recommendations for Butte County designating only the City of Chico as a nonattainment area, with the remainder of Butte County designated as unclassifiable based on the absence of monitoring data. CARB is expected to submit comments on EPA's designation by November 2008.

U.S. EPA staff will be providing a presentation on the PM2.5 nonattainment designation for the District Governing Board at the October 23, 2008 meeting which will be held at 10:00 a.m. at the Chico City Council Chambers, 421 Main Street, Chico.

**What's next?** The District will be preparing amendments to Rule 207, *Residential Wood Combustion* to reduce emissions of harmful PM from wood burning devices. Potential Rule changes include limiting the number of wood burning units allowed in homes, limit the use of large outdoor wood burning devices such as water heaters, and update the current list of approved zero-clearance fireplaces. District staff will also provide for Board consideration a model ordinance for city/county authorization which would require the replacement and/or removal of uncertified wood burning devices upon sale of a home and/or require replacement as a code upgrade when a building permit is issued for remodeling projects exceeding a certain dollar amount.

In addition, District staff will provide the Board with proposed new Rule 20X, *Mandatory Periodic Restriction of Wood Burning Devices* which could become effective November 1, 2009. This rule would prohibit the use of residential wood burning devices on days forecasted for poor air quality with exemptions for home owners who have wood heating as their only home heating option. The prohibition would only apply in high smoke impacted areas, such as the Chico urbanized area. Both the model ordinance and proposed rules would be proposed for Board approval at the November or December meeting.

**Why is this necessary?** The residents of Butte County want healthful air, and must 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 standards.

**What is not being considered?** A ban on existing wood stoves is NOT being considered, nor is prohibiting the use of wood stoves on poor air quality days if wood heat is the sole source of home heating. Outdoor residential burning is being reviewed separately.

**How can I get more information?** If you have questions or comments, please contact Gail Williams at 891-2882 or toll-free (888) 891-2882, or online at [www.bcaqmd.org](http://www.bcaqmd.org).

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**Butte County Air Quality Management District**  
**2525 Dominic Drive, Suite J, Chico, CA 95928**  
**530-891-2882      [gwilliams@bcaqmd.org](mailto:gwilliams@bcaqmd.org)**

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