



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Media contact**

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## **Stage 1 air quality burn ban called for Columbia Valley in Whatcom County**

The [Northwest Clean Air Agency](#) is calling a Stage 1 air quality burn ban beginning at 9:00 PM tonight in the Columbia Valley urban growth area (including the Peaceful Valley and Paradise Lakes developments) in Whatcom County because we are forecasting that cold, calm air will prevent harmful wood smoke from clearing out.

Burning wood for home heating – especially when it isn't done correctly – can produce smoke pollution that can harm you, your family and your neighbors. Fine particles in smoke can be inhaled deeply into lungs and damage delicate tissues.

Smoke pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause difficulty breathing, and make lung and heart problems worse. Elevated levels of smoke can be especially harmful to children, people with heart and lung problems, and adults age 65 and older.

Air quality may improve throughout the day. But smoke levels will build as temperatures drop and more people light fires to heat homes.

If you must burn wood for heat, burn small, hot fires. Check your chimney 20 minutes after lighting a fire to ensure that it is not smoking, and if it is, take action. Do not let fires smolder overnight.

### **Stage 1 burn ban**

#### **During a Stage 1 burn ban:**

- No burning is allowed in fireplaces or uncertified woodstoves, unless this is your only adequate source of heat.
- All outdoor burning is prohibited, even in areas where outdoor burning is not permanently banned.
- No visible smoke is allowed from any woodstove or fireplace, certified or not, beyond a 20-minute startup period.

Enforcement, if it is pursued, will not begin until at least 6 hours after the Stage I burn ban has been called.

#### **More information**

- Local air quality information: [Northwest Clean Air Agency](#).

- Statewide air quality monitoring: [Washington Department of Ecology](#).

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The Northwest Clean Air Agency is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency provides services and information related to asbestos, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, woodstoves and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at <https://nwcleanairwa.gov/>.