

Don't Light Tonight Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is "Don't Light Tonight"
 - a. Don't Light Tonight is a SLO County APCD initiative that asks residents to voluntarily refrain from burning wood or using their fireplaces and wood stoves on days with higher forecasted air pollution levels, unless they are using their fireplace/wood stove as their primary source of heat.

2. What regions of SLO County are typically covered by a "Don't Light Tonight" advisory?
 - a. Don't Light Tonight Program advisories follow the boundaries of San Luis Obispo County. When the APCD issues an advisory, we will include specific regions in SLO County that are most affected. Historically, during the winter months, these high particle pollution levels from wood smoke occur in the northern portion of SLO County (Paso Robles, Atascadero, Templeton).

3. Is this a burn ban? Are there penalties?
 - a. Don't Light Tonight is a voluntary program. There are no penalties for using your fireplace or wood stove within SLO County during Don't Light Tonight advisories.

4. Why should I participate in this voluntary program?
 - a. Wood smoke can have serious health impacts at certain levels. As a public health agency, SLO County APCD is tasked with protecting residents from the harmful effects of air pollution. Wood burning reduction programs have widely been shown to have strong positive effects on reducing particulate pollution and improving human health.

5. Why not restrict agricultural and backyard burning instead?
 - a. SLO County APCD runs a comprehensive backyard and agricultural burn program for area farms that includes restrictions on size, length, timing and type of material burned. In addition, SLO County APCD does not allow agricultural or backyard burning during active Don't Light Tonight advisories, and issues violations and fines to those who burn without a permit or who burn when it is not allowed.

6. What are you doing about particulate pollution from the Oceano Dunes?
 - a. Over the past 10 years, both the Air Pollution Control District and the Off-Highway Vehicle Division of State Parks have performed numerous scientific studies to determine the nature, cause and extent of the high particulate matter (PM) concentrations impacting air quality and public health on the Nipomo Mesa. In April 2018, a Stipulated Abatement Order was approved by the APCD Hearing Board. This

Order identified a four (4) year timeline to establish an initial target of reducing the maximum 24-hour PM₁₀ baseline emissions by fifty percent (50%). For more information on the Stipulated Abatement Order or the numerous studies and all related documents, please click [here](#).

7. Will refraining from using my wood burning device make a difference?
 - a. Definitely! In addition to helping the community reduce its overall air pollution emissions, you'll be helping your neighbors. Particularly on calm days — which tend to align with Don't Light Tonight advisories — wood smoke can linger in a neighborhood. Neighbors who are pregnant, elderly, very young or have pre-existing conditions are very susceptible to the effects of wood smoke. Exposure to wood smoke during pregnancy has been associated with lower birth weights in several EHP studies and has been linked to neurological and lung development problems for newborns and infants. Young children exposed to wood smoke also have a higher lifetime risk of developing lung cancer than adults.

8. Is it only fireplaces that you don't want us to burn in during a Don't Light Tonight Advisory?
 - a. Every little bit helps. If you can also cut back your burning in outdoor devices, that would help us keep particulate matter pollution to a minimum and further protect the health of our community.

9. Are you the only air district doing a Don't Light Tonight Initiative?
 - a. No, there are other air districts throughout the state that also have Don't Light Tonight programs or Spare the Air programs – in an effort to reduce seasonal woodsmoke and ozone.

10. Other than participating in Don't Light Tonight, what other ways can we help protect our blue skies and keep our community healthy?
 - a. Replacing gas-powered lawn and gardening equipment with electric versions helps cuts down on both particulate pollution and smog creation. Driving less also helps reduce smog; consider public transit, carpooling, cycling and walking. Plug-in electric vehicles also reduce or eliminate traditional gas consumption emissions, which are a major source of year-round air pollution in California. SLO County APCD also has a Woodsmoke Reduction Program, this county-wide grant program offers financial assistance to offset the cost of replacing your old, dirty fireplace or woodstove.

Alternatives to Burning

1. Is a gas insert better for the air than wood burning?

- a. Yes! Burning propane or natural gas in a fireplace insert will produce very little air pollution while still providing heat and ambiance.
2. What about pellet stoves or EPA-certified wood stoves?
 - a. These types of devices do reduce particulate pollution substantially, provided that they are installed properly, the proper fuel is used, and your chimney is clean.
3. I don't need to heat my whole house, so it's cheaper to burn wood than run my furnace.
 - a. You can save money on your energy bill and avoid the mess, cost and health effects of burning wood by making your home more energy efficient. Simple fixes like weather stripping and tight window seals can trap heat inside your home during the winter. You can also invest in high-efficiency windows, wall and ceiling insulation and smart thermostats to save money. A simple fix when you don't need to heat the entire house is to simply close the vents in vacant rooms when you turn on your heater, which helps the rooms you want heated warm up faster.
 - b. You should also check with SLO County's Energy and Climate team to find out more about energy efficiency financings and rebate information:
<https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Planning-Building/Energy-and-Climate.aspx>