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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Help Keep Our Air Clean This Winter

Bishop, CA – With the arrival of colder weather and shorter days, smoke from wood-burning stoves is back. Our clean air is one of the Eastern Sierra's most important resources. To keep our air as clean as possible, the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District would like to remind everyone of steps we can take to make sure our famous views stay clear and our air stays clean. When communities in the Eastern Sierra experience periods of cold, calm weather, local air quality can quickly deteriorate as concentrations of wood smoke build up in the stagnant air.

If you heat with wood, please be considerate of your neighbors and protect the health of your family by burning clean, hot fires and checking your chimney periodically for emissions. There are a few simple steps that everyone can take to improve our air quality. Most important is to be sure to have clean burning fires. This means burning well-seasoned dry wood, making sure that your fire is getting plenty of air, and not burning trash in your woodstove or fireplace. Use only non-coated and non-colored paper with dry kindling to start fires. Closing the draft on a stove to "let the fire smolder" creates a terrible amount of pollution and should be avoided. Remember that after start-up, any fire that produces a visible smoke plume is polluting the air.

To see if your fire is burning as clean as possible, go outside 15 minutes after starting the fire and look at the chimney. If only a thin wispy column of smoke or no smoke is visible, the fire is burning well. If smoke is clearly visible, then your fire needs more air, the wood is not dry enough, or the wood is not split small enough.

The goal is to start a wood fire with only one match and get the fire going immediately. When the flames from the kindling begin to die down, add several small pieces of firewood. Try not to smother the fire with new pieces, so place the pieces on or behind the burning kindling.

Live coals remain after the fire has burned down, and this is the time to shift the remaining charcoal. Rake the live coals forward to just inside the loading door, and start with the kindling. If the charcoal is still glowing, you can place additional firewood on and behind the charcoal. Be careful not to overload the wood stove, which can cause excessive smoldering. Open up the air inlets fully, and close the door. If everything is placed just right, the flame should soon re-ignite.

The most important rule is "Never let the fire smolder." With well-seasoned dry firewood and adequate air in the firebox, wood burns hot with less visible smoke and air pollution. A hot fire results in more complete combustion of the firewood, which gives you more heat from the wood that you burn. Incomplete combustion of your firewood reduces the amount of heat you can get from your wood stove, and increases air pollution.

The skills needed to operate a wood burning system effectively need to be practiced to get them correct, and if you can get a fire going with a single match and get a red-hot fire burning, you've accomplished something worth knowing.

A free "Woodburning Handbook" explaining clean wood burning techniques is available from the Great Basin Air Pollution Control District or can be downloaded at www.gbuapcd.org/Information or call 872-8211.