Today Is Salt Lake County’s First “No Burn” Day of the 2018–19 Season
Penalties for burning solid fuels illegally could reach $299

(SALT LAKE COUNTY)—Salt Lake County Health Department (SLCoHD) reminds residents today that burning solid fuels (wood, coal or pellets) is prohibited in Salt Lake County unless the Utah Division of Air Quality determines it is an “unrestricted action” day. In Salt Lake County, days labeled by the state as “voluntary action” or “mandatory action” are both NO BURN days, and today is the first so-called “voluntary action” day of the 2018–19 season.

The burning prohibition includes fireplaces, heating stoves (including “EPA-certified” stoves) and outdoor fires (bonfires, patio fire pits), though burning for heat in an emergency, such as a power outage, is allowed.

“As most people know, we continue to struggle with air quality issues along the Wasatch Front and solid fuel burning is a significant contributor to the valley’s air pollution,” said Gary Edwards, executive director of SLCoHD. “Salt Lake County residents should assume burning is prohibited; unless they’ve explicitly confirmed the day is ‘unrestricted,’ their default behavior should be to not burn solid fuels.”

Residents can determine if it is an “unrestricted action” day by visiting SaltLakeHealth.org, the “Forecast” page of air.utah.gov or by downloading the UtahAir mobile app.

The health department has the authority to issue notices of violation after investigating a complaint of burning on a no-burn day. For first-time offenders, health inspectors generally provide education and do not assess penalties, but SLCoHD will begin issuing fines for subsequent violations confirmed by inspectors; state law allows fines of up to $299 per day. During the 2017–18 burning season (November 1, 2017–March 1, 2018), SLCoHD received 90 complaints about illegal burning in the county.

One fireplace emits as much particulate pollution as 90 sport-utility vehicles, and the pollution from one traditional wood-burning stove is equivalent to the amount emitted by 3,000 gas furnaces producing the same amount of heat per unit. Even “EPA-certified” stoves still emit as much pollution as 60 gas furnaces.

Particulate pollution, known as PM2.5 and PM10, is particularly dangerous to health—even more than unattractive smog that is visible to the naked eye. The tiny, microscopic particles created by burning wood and other solid fuels can enter the blood stream and cause breathing and heart problems. The particles in wood smoke are so tiny that even doors and windows cannot keep them out; up to 70 percent of the wood smoke that exits a chimney re-enters nearby homes.

Residents may alert SLCoHD air quality officials to illegal burning by calling 385-468-8888 (option 1) during regular business hours (Monday–Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) or reporting online anytime at SaltLakeHealth.org (click “Report a Problem”).

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