



American Lung Association in California Cautions Against Wood-Burning and Urges Cleaner Alternatives for Winter Heat

(November 28, 2016) - With the arrival of cooler temperatures, the American Lung Association in California is urging the public to avoid wood burning and to consider cleaner heating alternatives. Burning wood emits harmful toxins and fine particles into the air that can worsen asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

“Breathing particle pollution – or soot –can shorten life and send those most at risk to the emergency room,” said Sharon Chinthrajah, MD, Divisions of Pulmonary/Critical Care and Allergy/Immunology, Stanford University School of Medicine and a volunteer physician for the American Lung Association in California. “Wood smoke particles are so small, they can bypass the airway defenses and enter directly into the lung and bloodstream and can cause damage to cells, and lead to lung disease and heart attacks.”

As with any pollution, children are especially at risk. Their lungs do not fully form until the age of 18 and exposure to higher levels of wood smoke can lead to reduced lung function and risk of future lung disease. For children with asthma, breathing wood smoke can lead to serious asthma attacks and breathing emergencies.

What Residents Can Do To Breathe Easier This Fall and Winter

- Enjoy the glow without the smoke - natural gas, propane and electric devices are all cleaner alternatives.
- Convert a wood-burning fireplace or stove to use either natural gas, propane or electric heat pumps to eliminate exposure to the dangerous fumes wood burning generates. Any wood burning emits harmful particles that can contribute to dangerous air pollution.
- Directly vent heating devices outside the home to reduce exposure to carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and other emissions produced by these energy sources.
- Contact your local air district to learn more about their programs to reduce wood smoke pollution. For a list of air districts in California, visit <http://www.arb.ca.gov/capcoa/roster.htm>

For more information about the health effects of particle pollution from wood burning and ways to improve lung health, please visit lung.org or call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872).