



News Release

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Inversions trap smoke in Valley

As colder weather comes to the Okanagan, temperature inversions become more common, resulting in cloudy, hazy winter days.

“A temperature inversion is caused by a warm air mass that moves over an area and traps the cooler air below,” says Kate Bergen, Regional Air Quality Coordinator. “During these inversions, air currents that normally carry smoke and pollutants higher into the atmosphere, slow or stop. This can cause pollutants to get trapped near the surface, leading to visible haze.”

To help alleviate air quality problems associated with temperature inversions, the Central Okanagan has implemented some of the most stringent air quality bylaws found anywhere in the Province, covering both residential wood burning and open burning.

Residents that burn wood, whether it is for home heating or an occasional fire in a conventional fire place, are only permitted to burn dry (seasoned) wood. To prepare your firewood, it must be properly cut, stacked and covered for at least eight months prior to use.

When it comes to open burning, Central Okanagan residents that are allowed to burn outdoors require a valid permit. Permits are available at your local fire jurisdiction and are only available for properties greater than one hectare. Only woody debris (e.g. branches and prunings) that is sufficiently dry is permitted to be burned. Compostable material (e.g. leaves and grass) and backyard barrel burning are not permitted. Burning is not permitted on land that is being converted from one use to another, for example agricultural land that has been cleared for development.

“To assist local farmers, we’ve developed a free chipping program, which is available for growers removing orchards for the purpose of replanting,” says Bergen. “Before you start removing your trees, please contact me and I would be happy to provide you with more details.”

For open burning to occur, residents with a valid permit are required to call the Central Okanagan open burning information line to confirm that the venting index and air quality conditions are acceptable. Before lighting any fire call toll free 1-855-262-BURN (2876) on the day you want to burn to confirm that burning is permitted.

If you’re concerned that illegal open burning may be occurring, first call the Central Okanagan open burning information line to check whether burning is permitted on that day. If burning isn’t allowed, contact the Regional Fire Dispatch Center at 250-469-8577 to report the incident.

For more information on Regional Air Quality Program initiatives in the Central Okanagan visit: regionaldistrict.com/airquality or contact Kate Bergen, Regional Air Quality Coordinator at 250-469-8408 or email kbergen@kelowna.ca.

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