Stage 1 Burn Ban for Mason County

Local News

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A Stage One Burn Ban is being called for Thurston & Mason Counties **effective 5 p.m. today** and continuing at least through the end of the week.Under a Stage 1 Ban, no burning is allowed in fireplaces or uncertified wood stoves, and all outdoor burning is prohibited, even in areas where outdoor burning is not permanently banned. Additionally, no visible smoke is allowed from any wood stove or fireplace, certified or not, beyond a 20-minute start-up period.A system of stable, high pressure over Western Washington, coupled with cold overnight temperatures has resulted in air pollution levels climbing enough to raise concerns about the air quality and its impacts on health.

A change in weather will be needed to restore cleaner air quality, yet that’s not forecast to occur this week.While pollution levels in Thurston and Mason Counties warrant the Stage One Ban, other counties within the jurisdiction of the Olympic Region Clean Air Agency (ORCAA) haven’t reached that level. ***To avoid bans in their areas, the residents of Pacific, Grays Harbor, Clallam, and Jefferson Counties are asked to voluntarily refrain from all outdoor burning, and to use safe alternatives to wood heat if possible.***Of particular concern are fine particles released by smoke from wood stoves and fireplaces. The Washington State Department of Health recommends that people who are sensitive to air pollution limit time spent outdoors, especially when exercising. Air pollution can trigger asthma attacks, cause difficulty breathing, and make lung and heart problems worse. Air pollution is especially harmful to people with lung and heart problems, people with diabetes, children, and older adults (over age 65).Olympic Region Clean Air Agency staff will continue to monitor the situation to determine when the burn ban can be lifted. In the meantime, here are some other things people can do to help protect the air we breathe:If you have a certified wood stove or fireplace insert, make sure you are using it properly so you don’t produce excess chimney smoke. Excess smoke is always illegal. To learn more about clean burning techniques or upgrading to a certified, pellet, natural gas or propane stove, visit http://www.epa.gov/burnwise/To determine if your stove is certified, visit www.orcaa.org.Limit your driving as much as possible, since vehicles are a big source of air pollution year round. Check air-quality forecasts and current conditions at www.orcaa.org.For more information about Burn Ban regulations, you may refer to Chapter 173-433 of the Washington Administrative Code.