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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION URGES SAFE AND LESS POLLUTING BURNING OF WOOD IN COLD WEATHER MONTHS

(14/P128) TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection is reminding New Jersey residents to take steps to reduce their impact on air quality when burning wood for heat as the weather turns colder, whether in fireplaces, wood stoves, or outdoor wood boilers.

“While burning wood is very comforting and cozy, it’s important to remember that wood smoke contains fine particles that contribute to air pollution,” said Jane Herndon, Assistant Commissioner for Environmental Management. “You can take a few simple steps, including having a properly maintained woodstove or fireplace, to minimize your impact on the environment and your neighbors, while protecting your home and safety.”

The DEP recommends following these simple guidelines:

- Allow wood to season before burning it. Seasoning entails allowing the wood to sit outdoors for at least six months. Seasoned wood is darker, has cracks in the end grain and sounds hollow when smacked against another piece of wood.
- Use a wood moisture meter to test the moisture content of wood. Wood burns most efficiently when its moisture content is below 20 percent.
- Stack wood neatly off the ground with the top covered to protect it against rain and snow.
- Keep fires burning hot.
- Regularly remove ashes to ensure proper airflow.
- Never burn garbage, cardboard, plastics, wrapping materials, painted materials or other materials in your stove or fireplace.
- Keep anything flammable - including drapes, furniture, newspapers and books - far away from any wood-burning appliance. Keep an accessible and recently inspected fire extinguisher nearby.

The DEP also urges residents to check local air quality at <http://www.njaqinow.net> prior to burning wood. Consider other heating alternatives on days the air quality is unhealthy.

State regulations and some municipal ordinances prohibit the emission of visible smoke from outdoor wood boilers. Wood boilers heat a fluid that is circulated in homes and buildings for

heating purposes. Under state regulations, these boilers may only emit visible smoke for three minutes every half-hour to allow for start-up.

In deciding how to heat your home this winter and reduce your exposure to fine particles from wood smoke, DEP recommends upgrading to a U. S. Environmental Protection Agency-certified wood stove or fireplace insert. The newer equipment will reduce air pollution and is much more energy efficient.

For more information on wood burning in New Jersey, visit:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/baqp/woodburning.html>

For more on the EPA's Burnwise program, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/burnwise/>

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