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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RECOMMENDS BEST PRACTICES FOR WOOD BURNING DURING COLDER MONTHS
TIPS CAN HELP REDUCE AIR POLLUTION, POTENTIALLY HARMFUL HEALTH IMPACTS

(15/P117) TRENTON – With colder weather on the way, 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, whether in fireplaces, wood stoves, or outdoor wood boilers.

“As winter approaches, more homeowners turn to wood-burning fireplaces or wood stoves to heat their homes and save on heating costs,” said John Giordano, Assistant Commissioner for Air Quality, Energy and Sustainability. “With simple precautions and care, there’s much that can be done to minimize wood-burning emissions that impact the environment and the health of you and your neighbors.”

The DEP recommends following these guidelines for burning wood at home:

- 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 the wood from rain and snow.
- Start fires with newspaper and dry kindling. Keep fires burning hot.
- Regularly remove ashes to ensure proper airflow.
- Never burn garbage, cardboard, plastics, wrapping materials, painted materials or pressure-treated wood 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.
- Consider using an indoor air HEPA filter in the same room as a stove or fireplace. A study by the University of British Columbia indicates these filters can reduce indoor particle pollution by 60 percent.

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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