

Woodburning Appliance Ordinance Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the City of Santa Rosa pass a Woodburning Appliance Ordinance?

The City Council was concerned about the impact of wood smoke on its residents. The City Council believed that there was a need to adopt an ordinance to lessen the risk to human health and the environment caused by woodburning appliances.

When does the ordinance go into effect?

The Council adopted the ordinance on June 18, 2002 and it was effective 30 days later. The immediate impact was on building permits and a mandatory notification when an individual purchases a home about the ordinance and its requirements.

How does this affect building permits?

The ordinance affects both new home construction and remodels by requiring particular types of woodburning appliances in homes.

- **New Homes:** If a new home has a fireplace insert or a freestanding wood stove, it must be certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), be a pellet stove, be certified by the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution

Control District or be a gas log fireplace.

- **Remodels:** If a homeowner is remodeling within 12 inches of an older model freestanding wood stove or an older model fireplace insert and the remodel work exceeds \$2,500, the homeowner will be asked to remove the appliance. This does not apply to fireplaces without an insert or a pellet stove.

If I have a traditional open hearth fireplace in my home, am I affected by this ordinance?

No, it excludes traditional open hearth fireplaces and also wood fires used for cooking. It only applies to freestanding wood stoves and fireplace inserts.

Why are old freestanding wood stoves and fireplace inserts a problem?

Not all wood stoves and fireplace inserts are a problem. Wood stoves are used primarily for heat and burn for longer hours. Wood stoves made prior to 1991 produce unhealthy levels of toxic air contaminants. Since 1991, technology has improved and new stoves and inserts burn hotter and much cleaner than older models.

If I have one of the old and non-compliant models, how am I affected by the ordinance?

On June 1, 2004, it will be unlawful to use or operate one of these wood stoves or inserts. You do not need to replace the appliance, but you will not be able to use it.

How do I determine if my wood stove or appliance is affected by the ordinance?

Generally, if it was made before 1991, or has metal doors it does not comply. You can also look on the back of your wood stove for the EPA certification label.

But I am using the wood stove or insert for heat in the winter; what do I do?

If you are using a non-compliant wood stove for heat, we suggest that you replace the stove with a more efficient model. If this is your only source of heat, you can apply for a hardship exception which will allow you to use your older stove after June 1, 2004. Hardship applications can be picked up at the Community Development Department, City Hall, Room 3. If you have to burn wood for heat, you are encouraged to use the cleanest method possible.

What does this ordinance require when I sell my home?

As part of the real estate transaction, the seller of the property is required to provide a mandatory disclosure to the buyer regarding wood smoke and woodburning appliances. You can pick up his mandatory disclosure form from your real estate professional or at Community Development, Room 3, City Hall.

Are there items that I cannot burn in my fireplace?

Yes, you are prohibited from burning garbage, treated wood, plastic products, rubber products, waste petroleum products, paints, paint solvents, coal, glossy or colored paper, particle board or salt water driftwood.

What do I do if someone in my neighborhood is not complying with the ordinance?

First of all, your neighbor might not be aware of the ordinance requirements. You can help educate your neighbor by giving them a copy of this brochure, a copy of the free wood burning handbook available at www.sparetheair.org or at Community Development, Room 3, City Hall, or you can give them a copy of the ordinance # 3567.

For more information about the health effects of wood smoke or clean burning tips:

American Lung Association at its website at www.lungusa.org/redwoodempire or 707-527-LUNG (5864)

Bay Area Air Quality Management District at www.sparetheair.org or 1-800-HELP AIR.

Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association at www.hpba.org/consumer

Great Wood Stove Changeout at <http://woodstovechangeout.org>
(note: Santa Rosa does NOT have a change out program at this time, but this website has great general information about wood burning appliances.)

For complaints call 1-800-334-ODOR (6367).



city of Santa Rosa's Woodburning Appliance Ordinance FAQ's

