DEP NEWS RELEASE
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
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DEP OFFERS TIPS ON REDUCING POLLUTANTS AND SAFETY THREATS FROM BURNING OF WOOD DURING COLDER MONTHS

(16/P119) TRENTON – With colder weather and the holidays approaching, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin reminds residents to practice safety and take steps to reduce the impact burning of wood has on air quality in their homes and neighborhoods.

"Burning of wood – whether in fireplaces, wood stoves, or outdoor wood boilers – can help reduce energy costs and add a cozy ambience to any home as the weather turns colder," said Commissioner Martin.

"But wood burning also emits small particles and other air pollutants that can be significantly reduced with some common-sense practices, better protecting your health as well as your neighbors' health and creating the climate for a safer and more enjoyable season."

For some people, even short-term exposure to wood smoke can aggravate lung or heart conditions. Children, teen-agers, older adults and people with lung diseases such as asthma and COPD, or heart conditions are most susceptible to the effects of wood smoke.

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

- Allow wood to season before burning it. Seasoning means allowing the wood to sit outdoors for at least six months. Seasoning allows moisture to evaporate from the wood, making it burn more efficiently 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. Store wood that is to be used in the house a safe distance from fireplaces or stoves.

- Start fires with newspaper and dry kindling and keep them 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.

- Have chimneys cleaned annually by a certified chimney-sweep. Nearly seven percent of homes fires are caused by the buildup of creosote in the chimney. These fires can spread extremely rapidly, and are often signaled by flames leaping from the chimney or a low rumbling sound reminiscent of a freight train or airplane.

- Consider using an indoor air HEPA filter in the same room as a stove or fireplace. These filters can reduce indoor particle pollution by as much as 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.

If you plan on burning wood as a major way to heat your home this winter, the 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/

PHOTOS/EPA Burnwise website

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