



CLEARING THE AIR

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PRESCRIBED FIRES

Richard Stedman, Air Pollution Control Officer

Over the past several months, the Monterey Bay Air Resources District has received calls from concerned citizens regarding smoke impacts associated with prescribed fires (controlled burns) throughout our three-county jurisdiction. Simply put, prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, create fuel breaks for firefighters, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems. (continued on next page)

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The benefits of prescribed fire are well documented. However, very few air monitoring or epidemiological studies have focused on the air quality and health impacts of prescribed fire smoke. From the limited number of studies that have been conducted, it appears that smoke from prescribed fires can pose human health risks. However, these risks are typically less than those associated with wildfire smoke exposures. It has been well documented that emissions from wildfires are reversing air quality improvements throughout California. For example, due to wildfire smoke during the week of August 20th, parts of Santa Cruz County had the worst air quality on the planet.

Typically, prescribed fires are conducted under conditions to limit harmful smoke exposure. MBARD will only permit prescribed fires when conditions are conducive to limited smoke impacts. This includes burning when meteorological conditions are favorable to support adequate smoke dispersion, and wind patterns allow smoke to move up and away from populated areas or sensitive locations such as schools and hospitals. This is not an exact science and conditions can change from forecast predictions.



PRESCRIBED FIRES

As catastrophic wildfires continue to be a growing concern in California, the use of prescribed burning to reduce hazardous fuels is projected to increase. When appropriate, MBARD encourages alternatives to burning, such as mechanical mastication and animal grazing. However, when alternatives to burning are not feasible – due to excessive costs, technical inability, ecological needs, or the potential to cause adverse environmental impacts – burning may be the only option. Mitigating smoke impacts from controlled burns in forests adjacent to populated areas is inherently challenging. To address this challenge, MBARD is actively strengthening relationships with local fire authorities to improve smoke forecasting and to provide greater public notification.

MBARD will continue to work with fire authorities and land managers to make certain that smoke impacts from prescribed fires are reduced to the greatest extent possible. Information regarding prescribed burns, as well as air monitoring data, will be available on our [website](#).



Richard A. Stedman
RICHARD A. STEDMAN
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL OFFICER



LANDSCAPE EQUIPMENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM INCENTIVES

MBARD launched the Landscape Equipment Exchange Program (LEEP) in the fall of 2023. The LEEP program is designed to help reduce air pollution emissions in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties by incentivizing the replacement of combustion lawn and garden equipment with new, electric, zero-emission equipment.

The California Air Resource Board's 2020 Mobile Source Strategy is to have full transition to zero-emission small off-road engines (SORE) starting in 2024. This is consistent with Executive Order N-79-20, which calls for zero emissions for all off-road equipment in California by 2035.

Since 2021, the SORE program, which includes lawn and garden combustible equipment, has become a larger source of smog forming emissions than passenger cars in California. The replacement of combustion lawn and garden equipment with new, electric, zero-emission equipment will not only help reduce emissions to help ensure healthier, quieter communities but will help achieve the mandated equipment replacement transition.

Eligible replacement equipment types for the program include chainsaws, trimmers, edgers, brushcutters, leaf blowers, leaf vacuums, walk behind lawn mowers, and ride-on or stand/sit mowers.

The LEEP commercial category has \$315,000.00 in project funds. This includes public agencies, private businesses, and all operations and entities that are not considered residential. The maximum funding a commercial applicant can receive is \$15,000.00.

The LEEP residential category has \$80,000.00 in project funds. The maximum funding a residential applicant can receive is \$2,000.00.

The MBARD LEEP application and more information can be found at: [LEEP - Monterey Bay Air Resources District \(mbard.org\)](https://www.mbard.org/leap). The program is available until funds are exhausted.

Take the LEEP! Transition to zero-emission equipment!



WOOD STOVE CHANGE OUT PROGRAM INCENTIVES

On December 14th, MBARD launched the Wood Stove Change Out Program (WSCOP) for Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties. This program is part of a statewide woodsmoke reduction grant supported by California Climate Investments. This grant provides funding to invest in clean technologies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, while strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment—particularly in disadvantaged and low-income communities. MBARD has allocated \$264,000 to fund wood stove device replacement projects in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties.

MBARD's WSCOP incentivizes households using non-EPA-certified wood stoves and inserts, or open-hearth fireplaces used as a primary source of heat, to replace with cleaner burning and more efficient heating devices. This incentive can be used toward the purchase and installation of qualified devices. This includes eligible woodburning and wood pellet stoves, fireplace inserts, and all-electric heaters such as ductless mini-split heat pumps. Replacement devices using natural gas or propane are not eligible to participate in this year's program.

Incentives are offered in a rebate format which will be dispersed after the completion of a replacement project. The amounts of these incentives include:

- \$1,000 to replace an uncertified device with a certified wood burning or pellet stove/insert.
- \$2,000 to replace an uncertified device with an electric device or heat pump.
- *An additional \$500 is available for qualified low-income households and residents in disadvantaged communities and low-income areas.*

Applications are accessible through an online portal on the MBARD website. The program is available until funds are exhausted. For more information and access to the application, please go to the WSCOP webpage at www.mbard.org/wscop.



⁵ HOW DOES MBARD HANDLE CHIMNEY SMOKE COMPLAINTS?

With the weather turning colder, the Monterey Bay Air Resources District (MBARD) receives more complaint calls about chimney smoke. When a complaint is received, a staff person in MBARD's Compliance Division will speak with the complainant to collect information about the complaint. A letter will be mailed to inform the resident about their smokey chimney along with tips to minimize smoke.

Smoke is measured in the air as fine particulate matter or PM2.5. MBARD does not regulate private residences or neighborhood level air quality. MBARD is required by federal and state law to monitor air quality at the regional level. Our region designated as meeting the federal and state health based ambient air quality standards for PM2.5 in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties. MBARD has a network of eight regulatory air monitors and a PM2.5 sensor network to monitor smoke and the data can be [viewed online](#).

Ways to Minimize Chimney Smoke

A wood-burning fireplace or stove can create smoke which impacts your neighbors and be harmful to your lungs. Inhaling fine particles is especially harmful to children, elderly, or to people with heart and lung disease. But with some small changes, you can make a big difference.

- If you do burn wood, start fires with softwood kindling such as pine or fir. Always burn "seasoned" or dry wood. These woods are generally low in density, ignite easily, burn fast and hot and will heat the firebox and flue quickly. Hardwoods such as oak can take longer to ignite, but they burn slower and produce less smoke. Remember to use smaller fires in mild weather.
- Never burn garbage or other materials such as plastic or cardboard. It can cause toxic smoke that can be extremely harmful to you and your neighbors.
- Watch your chimney for smoke. Properly burning fires should give off only a wisp of white smoke. The darker and thicker the smoke, the more pollution the fire emits, and the more fuel it wastes.
- Have your chimney professionally cleaned. Keep your chimney swept and ash area clean to improve air flow and reduce emissions. Plus, it also will reduce fire hazards on the chimney which can be catastrophic.

Please check our [Woodstove Change Out Program](#) to replace existing wood-burning home heating devices with cleaner options.



ADVISORY: UPCOMING DEADLINES FOR TIER 3 PORTABLE DIESEL ENGINES OWNED BY LARGE FLEETS

The State Airborne Toxic Control Measure (ATCM) for Diesel Particulate Matter from Portable Engines Rated at 50 Horsepower and Greater contains a requirement that all portable Tier 3 certified diesel engines, built prior to January 1, 2009, rated at 50 to 750 brake-horsepower (BHP), and owned by a large fleet **may not operate in California on or after January 1, 2025**. The Statewide ATCM was first established in 2005 and revised in 2018. The revisions to the ATCM extended the phase out period for fleet requirements, giving businesses an extended time to plan for the replacement or retirement of the older engines.

To continue operation of the Tier 3 engine past the phase-out date, you must select one of the following options:

Option 1: Designate the engine as emergency-use or low-use, no later than July 1, 2024.

- Low-use engines are defined as engines operating 200 hours or less in a calendar year. If you elect to change the permitted designation of your prime-use engine to either emergency-use or low-use, a permit modification application must be completed and submitted to MBARD, along with the applicable application fee, no later than July 1, 2024. Applications are available on our [website](#).

Option 2: Add a properly functioning level-3 verified emission control technology that will enable full use of the engine after December 31, 2024.

- If you elect to add a level-3 verified emission control, a permit modification application must be completed and submitted to MBARD, along with the applicable application fee, no later than July 1, 2024. Applications are available on our [website](#).

If the options above do not meet the needs of your operational demands, you may replace this engine with a certified Tier 4 diesel engine by the December 31, 2024 deadline. Continued operation of the portable Tier 3 certified engine after December 31, 2024 constitutes a daily violation and you will be subject to enforcement action, which may include imposition of penalties.

ADVISORY: UPCOMING DEADLINES FOR TIER 3 PORTABLE DIESEL ENGINES OWNED BY LARGE FLEETS

If you elect to replace your certified Tier 3 engine with a certified Tier 4 engine, a permit modification application must be completed and submitted to MBARD, along with the applicable application fee, prior to operation of the certified engine. Applications are available on our [website](#).

If you elect not to replace your Tier 3 certified engine, or not to modify your current Permit to Operate to accept low-use or emergency-use operating limitations, or install a level-3 verified emission control technology to your Tier 3 certified engine, please submit a letter or a [Cancellation Form](#) to MBARD by December 31, 2024 requesting the cancellation of the Permit to Operate.

If you have any questions, please contact MBARD's Engineering Division at (831) 647-9411.



⁸ REGULATORY UPDATES TO STATE AND FEDERAL OIL AND GAS METHANE REGULATIONS

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) updated their methane regulations for oil and gas operations this year.

On June 22, 2023, the CARB Board adopted amendments to the [Oil and Gas Methane Regulation](#). These amendments will better align the regulation with EPA requirements, add a provision requiring repair of emission sources following notification of remotely-detected leaks, and make improvements based on implementation experience. MBARD has a Memorandum of Agreement with CARB to implement and enforce the regulation and receives grant funds from CARB to support these activities.

On December 2, 2023, EPA announced a [final rule](#) which includes a comprehensive suite of pollution reduction standards that address the largest sources of methane and other harmful pollutants at oil and gas facilities, including methane that leaks or is vented from equipment and processes. EPA estimates the rule will prevent an estimated 58 million tons of methane emissions from 2024 to 2038. The rule also clarifies how states can use their existing programs in plans for limiting methane emissions from existing sources and gives states two years to submit their plans for EPA approval. It is anticipated that CARB will submit a plan to EPA based on their recently updated Oil and Gas Methane Regulation.





VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR GRANTS & INCENTIVES:
[HTTPS://WWW.MBARD.ORG/GRANTS-INCENTIVES](https://www.mbard.org/grants-incentives)

- SERVING MONTEREY, SAN BENITO & SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES
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