

# State targets wood smoke pollution

## Calls for stoves to burn hotter and cleaner

Editor's Note

*This is the first story in a two-part series.*



Brian Myrick

### Wood stove exchange

Unload wood stoves at the Ellensburg Transfer Station, Wednesday, Oct. 31, 2012.

(Brian Myrick / Daily Record)

Air quality info, woodstove tips

- Online link to the state's air monitoring website interactive map: <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/enviwa/>; click on Ellensburg.
- All about state rules, tips and other info on burning wood, purchasing certified wood stoves and more: [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/indoor\\_woodsmoke/wood\\_smoke\\_page.htm](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/indoor_woodsmoke/wood_smoke_page.htm)
- Graph of small-particulate matter pollution rates by geographic locations around the state: [www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/docs/fineparticlepollution.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/docs/fineparticlepollution.pdf)

Making an air-quality difference

State Department of Ecology officials estimate that the 71 woodstoves turned in Nov. 3 by Kittitas County residents, if they were used regularly in a winter woodstove season, would produce a total of three tons of small-particulate smoke in a single season.

Posted: Thursday, November 15, 2012 2:00 pm | *Updated: 10:47 am, Thu Nov 15, 2012.*

By MIKE JOHNSTON senior writer |

Bob Gapp recently gave up on wood heat, pulled the wood stoves from his home and shop on Vantage Highway and got \$200 each in bounty money for turning them over to state authorities.

The old wood stoves aren't illegal to use if you've had them for years, but handing them over to the state Department of Ecology on Nov. 3 was part of an ongoing attempt to reduce the number of older, uncertified and inefficient-burning wood stoves now in use or still circulating in the community.

The old stoves, by state law, can't be sold, bartered, given away or traded because they don't meet new state and federal emission standards.

The overall goal is to encourage local wood-heat users to obtain state-certified, newer, more efficiently-burning stoves that use less wood and emit much less smoke when used properly. Getting money for turning in an old stove didn't obligate the participant to buy a new, state-certified stove.

The program, using tax revenue from hazardous waste generators, also wants to get the word out about using burning techniques and materials that decrease the amount of wood smoke getting into the atmosphere, even with older stoves, and prompt residents to consider switching to another source of heat.

"The timing was good, and it's the right thing to do," Gapp said while waiting in line to drop off his stoves at the Ellensburg solid-waste transfer station. "It helps the environment and helps our breathing."

Gapp, 64, said he'd been thinking of taking the two stoves out, and the wildfires last summer that fouled the Kittitas Valley's air were fresh on his mind when he learned the DOE would take old wood stoves in a turn-in event Nov. 3 at the transfer station on Industrial Way.

Checks amounting to \$200 per stove were later mailed to those who brought in 71 stoves that day. Some said they'd use the money for Christmas, some said it would go toward a new, certified wood stove.

Gapp, who's lived in the valley for 25 years, also has an electric forced-air furnace in his home. He plans to use a propane gas heater in his shop.

"And besides, for me, burning wood is a dirty job."

## **Health risk**

The aim of the woodstove bounty campaign, according to DOE smoke management specialist Jay Carmony, is to reduce the severity of pollution in fall and winter when wood smoke can become concentrated as it's trapped in the Kittitas Valley during cold days with stagnant air.

"We know wood smoke is a health risk. More healthy air is what we want to achieve," Carmony said. "That will help everyone. As we join with the community in these projects, we're hoping to see some positive benefits."

## **One of top 10 in state**

The valley, including Ellensburg, is in the top 10 sites around the state that, at times, have some of the highest levels of fine-particle pollution from smoke and diesel fumes, the DOE said.

Carmony said he's not against woodstoves and, on the contrary, he's an advocate of wood heat to lessen home-heating costs if it is done correctly.

"That means smaller fires burning much hotter with drier wood, and not banking it overnight and causing a smoldering fire with lots of smoke," Carmony said.

### **Fill up the valley**

For much of the year the Kittitas Valley has excellent air quality because of steady winds, Carmony said, but winter brings calm or stagnant air that can get very cold.

"The valley is fairly small, geographically, with pronounced ridges," Carmony said. "When a winter inversion is on, that warmer layer can be at or near the ridge tops. The valley then can fill fairly quickly with wood smoke that's not dissipating."

The fall and winter home heating season generally runs from Oct. 1 through March 31, and in that period the Kittitas Valley typically has 15 to 20 days or more where an inversion parks over the valley, he said.

That's when smoke can build up to unhealthy levels, Carmony said, as measured by a single air-quality measuring device in downtown Ellensburg.

DOE officials say the small smoke and soot particles can become imbedded in the lungs and can be associated with respiratory ailments, cancer and lung disease.

### **Upgrade**

Carmony said the Nov. 3 turn-in event, the third in the state, was a team effort: people assisting Carmony included a DOE employee, two Americorps members volunteering for HopeSource, four Washington Conservation Corps volunteers and a HopeSource staffer.

Wayne Thompson of Ellensburg also was in line Nov. 3 to drop off his stoves. He was hauling three old stoves: two were his and one was from a customer of his chimney sweep business, Top to Bottom.

### **Uncertified**

None of the stoves were certified; of the two he owned, one was pulled from his home and the other was already out.

Thompson also happens to install woodstoves for a living, working for Armstrong's Stove and Spa in Ellensburg.

"This is a great deal," Thompson said. "My boss at Armstrong's is giving me a good deal on buying a new, certified stove for my home; it's a pretty good upgrade for a much more efficient stove."

He leans to using his woodstove as much as he can in winter as a way of cutting his natural gas bill from use of a free-standing stove.

Thompson estimated he'd only get about \$50 if an old stove went for scrap metal.

"Looking at \$200 for each, well, that's good; you can't go wrong."

