



State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT  
Governor

SPENCER J. COX  
Lieutenant Governor

Department of  
Environmental Quality

L. Scott Baird  
Executive Director

Kim Shelley  
Deputy Director

**NEWS RELEASE**  
Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2020

**CONTACT**  
Jared Mendenhall  
Public Information Officer  
Cell: 801-707-0817  
[jmendenhall@utah.gov](mailto:jmendenhall@utah.gov)

## ***Seasonal Wood Burning Restrictions Begin November 1***

*DEQ urges residents to use the UtahAir app for air quality forecasts, current conditions and action alerts*

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Division of Air Quality (DAQ) reminds Utah residents that wood burning restrictions go into effect Nov. 1, 2020.

“Although 2020 has been a year full of the unexpected, Utah’s weather and geography hasn’t changed,” said Bryce Bird, director of DAQ. “The coming months will have plenty of calm winds, cold temperatures and long nights. These are the conditions that set up thermal inversions in Utah’s valleys. By observing wood burning restrictions, Utah residents can improve our air quality and protect the health of their neighbors and loved ones.”

Under normal conditions, air temperature decreases with altitude. During the wintertime, in the bowl-shaped valleys in Utah, the inverse occurs. Snow, long nights and calm winds dramatically cool the air at the bottom of the valley and temperatures increase with increasing altitude. This creates a warm inversion layer that acts as a cap that stops atmospheric mixing. Fine particulates (PM2.5), dust and smoke become trapped at ground level where they can harm the health of residents.

Wood smoke contributes to the inversion by releasing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) oxides of nitrogen (NOx), and other fine particulates as the wood burns. In addition to the direct PM2.5 emitted from burning, VOCs and NOx react to form even more PM2.5.

Restricting wood burning is an effective strategy to curb some of these emissions, and are implemented as a proactive measure when DAQ scientists see the potential for unhealthy levels of emissions in the coming days from vehicles, as well as wood and coal burning fireplaces or stoves.

### **ACTION ALERTS AND HEALTH GUIDANCE**

Each day during the winter, DAQ meteorologists issue Action Alerts and Health Guidance to help residents plan ahead and adjust their activities during periods of winter inversion:

1. **Action Alerts:** Action alerts notify the public of the actions needed to combat *current* pollution levels. Three basic symbols are used to indicate unrestricted, voluntary and mandatory actions.
  - Unrestricted Action (symbol = ●): Wood and coal burning stoves or fireplaces may be used, but please use them in a proper manner to reduce smoke emissions.
  - Voluntary Action (symbol = ▼)\*: Voluntarily do not use wood and coal burning stoves or fireplaces. Reduce vehicle use by consolidating trips. Industry should optimize operating conditions to minimize air pollution emissions.
  - Mandatory Action (symbol = X): Wood and coal burning stoves or fireplaces must not be used. Reduce vehicle use by consolidating trips. Industry should optimize operating conditions to minimize air pollution emissions.

When mandatory restrictions are in place, the use of solid fuel appliances may result in penalties up to \$299 per day. If burning restriction violations are observed by the public, they should be reported to DAQ by calling 801-536-4000 during business hours or by filling out a simple form [online](#).

\*Salt Lake County has implemented mandatory burn restrictions on days when DAQ is calling for voluntary action.

2. **Health Guidance:** Health guidance helps determine how the highest pollution level of the day will affect human health. These are the green, yellow, orange or red ratings based on how much PM2.5 pollution is currently in the air.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

DAQ encourages Utah residents to visit the Utah Clean Air Partnership (UCAIR)—[www.ucair.org](http://www.ucair.org) — for more tips and ideas on how to reduce emissions, and to TravelWise ([www.travelwise.utah.gov](http://www.travelwise.utah.gov)).

DAQ will provide Utah residents with air quality forecasting throughout the winter through its UtahAir app (free for both iOS and Android), on the web at [air.utah.gov](http://air.utah.gov), and a toll-free message at 1-800-228-5434.

### **About DEQ**

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah's air, land and water through balanced regulation. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah's air, land and water. For more information, visit [www.deq.utah.gov](http://www.deq.utah.gov), follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)).