# COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY

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## Revisions to Open Burning Regulation to Take Effect January 1, 2015

**PITTSBURGH** – The Allegheny County Health Department today announced that recently approved revisions to its open burning regulation will take effect January 1, 2015.

"These revisions will better protect public health and the environment, because wood smoke emissions from open burning contain fine particulate pollution and air toxics that can aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular health issues," said Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker.

The regulation, in place since 1970, will be broadened to apply to any fire or combustion which occurs in a chiminea, fire pit, outdoor fireplace or grill as well as its longstanding application to any fire or combustion from which air contaminants pass directly into the open air without passing through a flue.

Other revisions include giving inspectors greater discretion to prohibit or reduce fires that are unhealthy or causing a nuisance; limiting the size of a wood fire to no more than 3 feet wide, 3 feet long and 2 feet high; establishing a setback requirement of at least 15 feet from the nearest neighbor's dwelling or inhabited area: and limiting materials that may be burned to clean wood, propane or natural gas, with exceptions for charcoal in outdoor fireplaces or grills used for cooking and for fire logs, paraffin logs or wood pellets used in outdoor fireplaces.

In addition, the regulation will restrict recreational open burning, except for commercial preparation of food, on air quality action days, which occur when the Air Quality Index (AQI) indicates pollution levels are unhealthy. The AQI is available at www.achd.net, www.airnow.gov or by calling **412-578-8179**. In 2013, there were 15 air quality action days in the region.

The Health Department encourages residents to subscribe to Allegheny Alerts, a community notification system that can let them know when there is an air quality action day and open burning would be prohibited. To sign up for Allegheny Alerts, please visit www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts. The alerts are free and can be delivered via phone, email, text or an app to your mobile device.

Stricter federal standards for controlling fine particulate pollution, greater knowledge of the health effects of wood smoke and continuing public complaints about open burning led the Health Department and its Air Pollution Control Advisory Committee to work with stakeholders to revise the open burning regulation. Complaints about open burning account for 25% of all air quality complaints and residential wood burning contributes an estimated 19% to fine particulate pollution levels in Allegheny County.

The revised open burning regulation and other information related to wood burning are posted on the Health Department's website at www.achd.net/air/.

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# ACHD Open Burning Regulation
# FACT SHEET

- No material other than clean wood, propane, or natural gas may be open burned EXCEPT for:
  - Commercially available fire logs, paraffin logs, or wood pellets;
  - Paper or commercial smokeless fire starters in order to start a fire;
  - Charcoal for the preparation of food only.

- Fires may be no larger than 3' wide by 3' long by 2' high.

- Fires must be at least 15 feet from the nearest neighbor's dwelling or inhabited area, including:
  - Property line
  - Roadway
  - Sidewalk
  - Public access area

- Wood burning activities are prohibited on Air Quality Action days, with the exception of burning for the commercial preparation of food
  - Subscribe to receive email, text, or smart phone app notifications of burn ban days at www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts

- Burning may be prohibited or reduced if it is considered a nuisance, based on the following criteria:
  - The severity of the amount of air pollutants;
  - The duration or frequency of open burning;
  - The topography of the surroundings;
  - The meteorological conditions.

- Open burning permits are available for ceremonies fostering of agriculture, abatement of a public health hazard, and firefighting instruction; however, all permitted open burning is prohibited on Air Quality Action Days.
  - Contact ACHD at (412) 578-8103 for more information

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