Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recently released tips for seasonal burning in fireplaces and wood stoves.

Local weather and topography contribute to temperature inversions that can trap pollutants close to the ground. Wood burning can make the problem worse, particularly if burning devices are poorly operated, not maintained or burning unseasoned firewood.

The department recommends following these tips to minimize the impact on health and air quality:

—Burn well-seasoned wood that has been stored properly and allowed to dry for several months. It will burn efficiently and produce little smoke.

—Never burn garbage, colored paper or chemically-treated wood.

—Burn small, hot fires, adding small amounts of wood as needed to keep the fire burning vigorously to reduce visible smoke and use fuel more efficiently.

—Clean and inspect stoves and fireplaces annually to prevent the buildup of creosote, a highly flammable and toxic substance responsible for most chimney fires.

Residents should never smell smoke in their homes, something that indicates the device is not operating safely or efficiently. Smoke contains many of the same pollutants as cigarettes and produces harmful carbon monoxide. Breathing wood smoke has been shown to increase cardiovascular problems, irritate lungs and eyes and trigger headaches.

For further info, contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s Air Pollution Control Division at 303-692-3281.

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