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NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Wood Burning Season upon Us

Choose Clean Air Switches to Winter Pollution Alerts

Salt Lake City, Utah – The arrival of winter weather is a reminder that the Utah Division of Air Quality (DAQ) is switching on its ‘Red Light Green Light’ program to alert people of winter air pollution conditions.

This is the time of year when DAQ’s three-day forecasts track the hard-to-see particles caused primarily by vehicle emissions, wood burning stoves and fireplaces that can shroud the valley in pollution-trapping inversions. On Nov. 1, the wood-burning restrictions go into effect.

“It’s crucial for everyone to heed pollution alerts now that the state is in the midst of drafting a plan to meet tougher federal pollution standards,” said Cheryl Heying, director of DAQ. “When the air quality is unhealthy we need to drive smarter, and limit, or prohibit firing up wood-burning stoves.”

DAQ monitors air pollution hourly and provides a three-day forecast on its Web site: <http://www.airquality.utah.gov/>. Under “green” conditions, wood burning is allowed. When pollution builds, “yellow” signals for voluntary no wood burning and efforts to limit driving. When pollution levels approach unhealthy, a “red” mandatory no burning is used and the elderly, children or anyone with respiratory problems are advised to stay indoors.

“Obviously some inversions are difficult to avoid because of meteorological conditions,” said Bo Call, manager of the Air Monitoring Center. “But if we all work together and reduce air pollution emissions we could prevent the pollution from getting worse.”

Winter air pollution can pose serious health problems when fine particles become lodged in lung tissue, decreasing lung function, increasing susceptibility to respiratory infections and aggravating breathing problems like asthma and chronic bronchitis. Children and older adults and those with existing heart and lung conditions are most sensitive to particulate air pollution. For more information on winter pollution and tips, visit Choose Clean Air at <http://www.cleanair.utah.gov/>.

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