



**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1916

Connecticut Public Health Association

c/o Eileen Kehl
241 Main Street 2nd Floor
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
cpha@cpha.info

Facts and Recommendations on Wood Smoke

Wood smoke is a significant contributor to both air pollution and adverse health effects. Wood smoke consists of particulate matter: tiny particles that can lodge in the respiratory system, causing immediate respiratory discomfort which can lead to other health conditions. Chemically similar to cigarette smoke, wood smoke also shares the same harmful results, including exacerbation of asthma and allergies, increased risk for respiratory infections and coronary disease, and acute and chronic bronchitis.¹ Wood smoke affects everyone; however the developing lungs of unborn and very young children can be especially compromised by the scarring caused by wood smoke, leading to decreased resistance to respiratory infection.²

Other States' Regulatory Responses

New England's nearly uniform response to wood smoke has been regulation by these states' environmental protection programs and not local public health. Maine,³ Massachusetts,⁴ New Hampshire,⁵ and Vermont⁶ have all adopted laws prohibiting the sale, installation, or use of outdoor wood boilers that do not meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Phase II standard limit for particular matter of 0.32 pounds per million British Thermal Units, while Rhode Island is introducing similar legislation this year.⁷ Massachusetts law further empowers localities and fire departments to enact their own rules and regulations which must first be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.⁸ Similarly, New Hampshire law names the Department of Environmental Services enforcers of their restrictions on certain outdoor wood boilers, while allowing local health officers the ability to investigate nuisances with technical assistance provided by the state's Department of Environmental Services.⁹

Recommendations

The Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) recommends the following:

- Ban wood boilers entirely, with a possible exception for farmers and some other uses removed from residential areas;
- Failing a ban, amend Connecticut General Statute Section 22a-174k to regulate outdoor wood burning with EPA standards; and
- Enforce those standards promptly and vigorously through the Department of Environmental Protection, as done by Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

CPHA opposes an addition to the Nuisance section of the Public Health Code referencing wood smoke that harms human health. Local health directors are already empowered to follow up with respect to wood smoke complaints. To *require* follow-up inappropriately prevents local health directors from allocating scarce resources in the manner they see fit to maximize the health of residents in their communities.

For additional information on CPHA's position on wood smoke and other public health issues, please contact CPHA Advocacy co-chairs Alyssa Norwood at alyssa.norwood@gmail.com or Kathy Lewis at kalewis@hartford.edu.

¹ C. Torres-Duque et al., (2008) Biomass Fuels and Respiratory Diseases: A Review of the Evidence. Proceedings of the American Thoracic Society Volume 5. pp 577–590 DOI: 10.1513/pats.200707-100RP

² Environment and Human Health, INC. “The Health Effects of Wood Smoke.” Available

http://www.ehhi.org/woodsmoke/health_effects.shtml

³ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Code of Maine Rules 06-096 Chapter 150. Available

<http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/06/096/096c150.doc>

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection 310 CMR 7.26(50) Outdoor Hydronic Heaters. Available

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/service/regulations/ohhregfl.pdf>

⁵ New Hampshire Statutes Title X Chapter 125-R:2. Available [Section 125-R:2 Unit Requirements.](#)

⁶ Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Regulations Chapter 5 Air Pollution Control Subchapter II Section 5-204. Available: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/air/docs/OWB%20Ph2%20Adopted%20reg%20CLEAN%20with%20eff%20date.pdf>

⁷ State Of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Department of Environmental Management Office of Air Resources Air Pollution Control Regulation No. 48. Available <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/air/pdf/pdf/draft4810.pdf>

⁸ Massachusetts General Statutes Chapter 111 Section 31C. Available [M.G.L. - Chapter 111, Section 31c](#)

⁹ New Hampshire Statutes Title X Chapter 147:16-b. Available [CHAPTER 147 NUISANCES; TOILETS; DRAINS; EXPECTORATION; RUBBISH AND WASTE](#)