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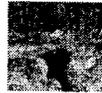
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Missoula way ahead of EPA on wood stove management



Michael Gallacher

Some homes in the Spanish Peaks neighborhood in Missoula's Mansion Heights endured intermittent fog Tuesday as most folks in the valley were enveloped by the shroud. The fog began to lift late Tuesday afternoon with warmer temperatures forecast through the week. Expect an increased chance of rain Friday and Saturday.

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March 08, 2015 5:00 pm • By Rob Chaney

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While other places have some hard work ahead to meet new federal wood smoke rules, Missoula has been ahead of the problem for years.

Evergreens turning brown in Missoula's on-again, off-again winter

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued new standards for how much pollution residential wood stoves can put up the stack. Several states have fought the move, arguing it hurts low-income residents who depend on wood heat.

But Missoula's mountain valley air quality has had such trouble with wood smoke, it started local changes back in 1986.

The new EPA rules apply mainly to manufacturers and sellers of inefficient stoves. Missoula's long requirement for cleaner stoves has brought most of its market up to speed.

The new EPA rules allow wood-burning stoves and fireplaces to release up to 4.5 grams of particulate matter per hour. By 2020, the standard goes down to 2 grams per hour.

"Most stoves out there already meet the first phase of the rule," said Ben Schmidt, Missoula city-county air quality specialist. "Most manufacturers won't have trouble putting out lots of stoves compliant with step one. Most are at 3 grams or less by testing. Many stoves out there wouldn't meet step 2, but they're pre-existing stoves, and not affected by the rule."

The rule change also won't affect air quality standards that trigger health alerts or restrict open burning in Missoula. Fireplace particulate is the biggest single contributor to air-quality episodes.

But while the rules can restrict use of decorative fireplaces on bad-air days, people who depend on wood for their primary household heat can continue to burn.

Wood use varies widely across the nation. Montana ranks 40th in total emissions, but its small population gives that figure limited value. The top three emitting states are Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota – each of which puts up 20 times more particulate than Montana does per year.

Vermont leads in per-capita emissions, putting up 22.01 pounds of wood smoke particles for each of its 626,450 residents. Minnesota is second with half as much: 11.74 pounds per person.

Montana ranks 20th, with 2.96 pounds per person. That's behind neighboring states Oregon (7th, 7.77 pounds), Idaho (8th, 5.63 pounds) and Washington (9th, 5 pounds), but just ahead of Wyoming (23rd, 2.6 pounds). North Dakota ranks 30th and South Dakota 33rd.

The national average is 2.5 pounds per person – which works out to 779,138,901 pounds a year of smoke particles.

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Tags Environmental Protection Agency, Heaters, Wood-burning Stove, Stove, Wood Fuel, Missoula



One more result of this misfired winter in Missoula is a lot of brown trees and shrubs that ought to be green in February. [Read more](#)

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The outdoor burning season begins across Montana on Sunday, March

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