

Fee supports work, replaces use of General Fund money

The Department of Ecology proposes an additional \$15 fee on the sale of new wood stoves, pellet stoves, and other types of solid fuel burning devices. This will increase the state's fees on the sale of each wood-burning appliance from \$30 to \$45. It will replace money that currently comes from the state General Fund to support Ecology's wood stove education and compliance program.

Purpose of the fee

More than 20 years ago, the Washington State Legislature directed Ecology and local clean air agencies to establish a wood stove education and compliance program. That program aims to educate wood stove dealers and the public about:

- The effects of wood stove emissions on health and air quality.
- How to get better efficiency and emission performance from wood stoves.
- Which wood stoves meet Washington's emissions standard.
- The benefits of replacing dirtier wood stoves with ones that meet Washington's standards.

In 1991, the Legislature directed Ecology to charge a \$30 fee on the sale of wood stoves and other wood-burning devices to pay for wood stove program education and compliance. The fee has not increased since 1991.

Reducing reliance on state General Fund

Revenue from the existing \$30 fee on the sale of a new wood stove does not cover Ecology's cost for the wood stove program. Money from the State General Fund has been used to supplement the program for several budget cycles. When less money is provided from the General Fund, the program's effectiveness is reduced.

During the current economic downturn, General Fund support for this activity may be reduced even further.

Why an additional fee?

The proposed \$15 fee would replace the existing General Fund support. This money will be used solely to operate the wood stove education and enforcement program activities in Ecology's jurisdictions. This fee would offset an equivalent reduction in Ecology's budget.

WHY IT MATTERS

Wood smoke harms people. Hundreds of U.S. and international scientific studies link the pollution from wood smoke to significant harmful health effects. These include heart attacks, strokes, severe lung diseases and asthma. Sometimes these problems cause deaths. In addition to direct health impacts, the health care and societal costs of these diseases drain the resources of residents, businesses and governments.

In Washington, smoke from home heating is a particular problem in winter. During still winter days and nights, pollution levels can build up over several days, pushing air quality to unhealthy levels. It is during these periods of stagnant air, when pollution levels are expected to rise quickly, that Ecology and local air agencies ask residents not to use fireplaces and wood stoves – unless they are the only source of home heat.

Contact information

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