



Focus

Pellet Stoves and the Law

Overview

Pellet stoves have grown in popularity as a home heating source. They feature mechanisms that automatically feed wood fuel pellets from a hopper into the fire. Pellet stoves, while generally more expensive than regular wood stoves, produce consistent heat with less tending of the fire.

Many people consider purchasing a pellet stove in order to have a form of wood heat that can be used in areas where burn bans can be called by the local clean air agencies.

Burn bans and pellet stoves

There are two stages of burn bans, also known as air quality impairments. During the first stage, pellet stoves certified or listed as a “non-affected facility” by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may be used. (*See the following sections for more on these two classes of pellet stoves.*) If your pellet stove is neither certified nor non-affected, then it may not be used during a Stage One burn ban.

During a Stage Two burn ban only homes with no adequate source of backup heat may burn pellet or wood stoves. (*See definition of backup heat below.*) It doesn't matter what kind of wood or pellet stove you have, certified or not: All homes with backup heat must shut down their stoves during a Stage Two ban to protect the quality of our air.

Adequate backup heat means any heating system that can maintain a temperature of 70°F three feet off the floor, when the heater is operating as designed. If your home lacks adequate backup heat, you do not have to shut down your wood or pellet stove during either burning ban stage.

What does “exempt” mean?

You may hear or read about “exempt” pellet stoves. **This does not mean that pellet stoves are exempt from burning bans.** The term “exempt” means that a pellet stove is exempt from the EPA certification process for wood stoves and inserts; but it still is subject to burn ban regulations.

These exempt models are not as airtight as wood stoves and are much less likely to violate air emission standards; they provide more air to the fire, which ensures more complete burning of the fuel.

The next two sections explain how to determine which type of stove you have (or are purchasing) and how your pellet stove fits into the burn ban regulations.

Certified pellet stoves

The easiest way to find out if you can burn your pellet stove during a Stage One ban is to see if it is certified. Some pellet stoves fall within the EPA's definition of a wood stove; they are required to be certified. These pellet stoves bear the same certification label—a metal plate on the back or side—as a certified wood stove or insert.

During a Stage One burn ban, certified pellet stoves may continue to burn, just like certified wood stoves and inserts. When a Stage Two ban is called, certified pellet stoves may not be used (unless there is no other source of adequate back-up heat).

Non-affected facilities

If a pellet is not certified, it may not be used during a Stage One burn ban unless it is a non-affected facility. This is a pellet stove that does not fall within the EPA’s definition of a wood stove; it provides enough air to fire to assure more complete fuel combustion.

To find out if your pellet stove is a non-affected facility, contact the dealer or manufacturer. They should be able to provide you with documentation from an EPA-accredited lab. Just like certified stoves, pellet stoves that are non-affected facilities still have to be shut down during a Stage Two burning ban (unless there is no other source of adequate back-up heat.)

If you are not certain whether your pellet stove is certified or a non-affected facility, you are required to refrain from using it during a Stage One burn ban.

For more information

For more information on wood heating requirements in your area, please contact your local clean air agency listed below:

Benton Clean Air Authority (<i>Benton County</i>) (509) 943-3396	Department of Ecology – Air Quality Program (360) 407-6800
Northwest Air Pollution Authority (<i>Island, Skagit, Whatcom Counties</i>) (360) 428-1617 or 1-800-622-4627 (<i>Island & Whatcom Counties</i>)	Department of Ecology – Central Regional Office (<i>Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan Counties</i>) (509) 575-2490
Olympic Region Clean Air Agency (<i>Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Mason, Pacific, Thurston Counties</i>) (360) 438-8768 or 1-800-422-5623	Department of Ecology – Eastern Regional Office (<i>Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman Counties</i>) (509) 456-2926
Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (<i>King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish Counties</i>) (206) 343-8800 or 1-800-552-3565	Department of Ecology – Industrial Section <i>Pulp Mills, Aluminum Smelters</i> (360) 407-6916
Southwest Clean Air Agency (<i>Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania, Wahkiakum Counties</i>) (360) 574-3058 or 1-800-633-0709	Department of Ecology – Northwest Regional Office (<i>San Juan County</i>) (425) 649-7000
Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority (509) 477-4727	Department of Ecology – Southwest Regional Office (360) 407-6300
Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority (509) 574-1410 or 1-800-540-6950	

If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in alternative format, please contact Judy Beitel at (360) 407-6878 (Voice) or 711 or 1-800-877-8973 (TTY).