



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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EPA Reclassifies Fairbanks as 'Serious' Nonattainment for Air Quality, Prompts Real Estate Measure and Commercial Wood Sellers Requirements

(FAIRBANKS, AK) — The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reclassified the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) PM_{2.5} Nonattainment Area from 'moderate' to 'serious' with an effective date of June 9, 2017. The FNSB PM_{2.5} Nonattainment Area does not meet federal health-based air quality standards for PM_{2.5}, which is found in wood smoke. With this reclassification, two existing Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) measures designed to improve air quality will become effective to help move the area closer to compliance with the health-based standards.

First, a real estate regulation will go into effect on June 9. This regulation requires removal or replacement of non-compliant wood-fired heating devices before the sale, lease, or conveyance of property within the Nonattainment Area unless they are EPA-certified (wood and pellet stoves), have a qualifying Phase 2 "White Tag" (hydronic heaters), or meet current emission standards. The requirement will reduce the number of older, uncertified wood-fired heating devices in the Nonattainment Area. Older wood heaters can have higher emissions compared to newer ones, and reducing their number is expected to improve air quality. Temporary waivers to the removal requirements will be available on a case by case basis and with consideration of a variety of factors identified in state regulation.

Second, DEC will begin implementing a measure that will affect firewood sales in the Nonattainment Area. Commercial wood sellers will be required to register with DEC if they sell firewood within the Nonattainment Area. Registered wood sellers will also be required to measure and document the moisture content of the wood sold and provide that information to consumers. Burning wood with a moisture content greater than 20% is considered 'wet' and causes increased emissions. DEC expects to release a public notice in the next few weeks to formally initiate the wood seller requirements. Commercial wood sellers will have 60 days from the date of the public notice to register with DEC and begin documenting and providing wood moisture content to purchasers of firewood.

PM_{2.5} is a type of air pollution found in wood smoke. It can prompt a variety of health problems when people are exposed to harmful concentrations. "These measures are designed to improve air quality and help bring the area closer to compliance with current standards. Controlling particulate matter will benefit public health throughout the Fairbanks North Star Borough community," said Denise Koch, DEC Director of Air Quality.

“Meeting the new federal requirements will be a challenge, but we appreciate that we are getting the most support we can hope for from DEC and the EPA,” said Mayor Karl Kassel of the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

These measures were put into place several years ago after an extensive public comment period to provide for increased air quality protection in the event that the area was not able to attain the standard. DEC has conducted outreach to the public and affected professions about these measures since 2016. For more information about air quality in the Borough, please visit:

Real Estate Measure — http://dec.alaska.gov/air/anpms/comm/fbks_pm2-5_real-estate.htm
Wood Seller Measure — http://burnwise.alaska.gov/moisture_disclosure_program.htm

For more information on air quality in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, visit <http://www.fnsb.us/transportation/Pages/Air-Quality.aspx> and http://dec.alaska.gov/air/anpms/comm/fbks1_pm.htm.

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