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## Mendocino County Air Quality Management District

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Mendocino County  
Air Quality Management District Board

Cal Fire, Mendocino Unit

Mendocino County Fire Districts & Departments

Subject: Year-Round Air Quality Permit Requirements for All Open Outdoor Burning in Mendocino County

As many of you know, the State of California has taken a renewed interest in the prevention of wildfire, and investigating different techniques to improve forest health throughout the state. This interest is evidenced by last year's legislative session through SB 901, which provided authorization of \$200 million in funding per year for five years to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) for healthy forests and fire prevention.

Additionally, SB 1260 requires Cal Fire and the California Air Resources Board (CARB), in coordination with local air districts, to develop and fund a program, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to enhance air quality and smoke monitoring, and to provide a public awareness campaign regarding prescribed burns.

Also, SB 856 appropriated \$2 million to ARB for local air districts to support the implementation of SB 901 and SB 1260 related to air monitoring of prescribed fires and public outreach.

Finally, the state has goals for reducing air emissions from wildfire within the Scoping Plan required by the Global Warming Solutions Act, the Forest Carbon Plan, the Short Lived Climate Pollutant Plan and the Natural and Working Lands Plan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/scopingplan.htm>  
<http://resources.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/California-Forest-Carbon-Plan-Final-Draft-for-Public-Release-May-2018.pdf>  
<https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/shortlived/shortlived.htm>  
<https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/natandworkinglands/draft-nwl-ip-040419.pdf>

The Mendocino County Air Quality Management District (District) plays an important role in our region in relation to smoke associated with wild fire, prescribed fire and pile burning used as a method for disposal of vegetative matter. During wildfire events the District deploys portable monitors in smoke impacted areas and transmits the data collected to the Air Resources Board. In addition to Air Quality Advisories issued in collaboration with Public Health, the District posts air quality information on its' website (mendoair.org) and transmits data to AirNow for public information. Under the Enhanced Smoke Management Program the District will also deploy portable monitors during prescribed burning and large pile burning to document smoke impacts from controlled burns for submission to ARB.

The District has important responsibilities and technical expertise available to residents, land owners and agencies that plan to use prescribed fire or controlled burning for the purpose of disposal of vegetative matter. Under California Code of Regulations (Title 17, Section 81000), air districts in California must approve smoke management plans for prescribed fire activities and other agricultural burning consistent with each District's Smoke Management Program.

The District recently reviewed these new responsibilities and current staff capacity, and has determined that it is in the best interests of the residents of Mendocino County that the District issue Air Quality permits year round, when burning is permitted, through the District office. The purpose of Air Quality permits and Smoke Management Plans is to reduce smoke impacts in the interest of public health. The District has a long history of working with fire agencies, land owners and others who are involved in prescribed fire or agricultural burn projects. The District's Air Quality permit is in addition to the permit that someone would need to obtain from Cal Fire to perform a prescribed fire or other agricultural burning in a state responsibility area (SRA) under 4492 of the CA Public Resources Code, or other fire agencies with local jurisdiction in Local Responsibility Areas.

The permitting of open outdoor burning has been confusing to the public due to differing agency requirements. In the past the District has handled its permitting for residential burning for disposal of vegetative matter<sup>2</sup>, with varying degrees of coordination with fire agencies at certain times of the year. The District has specific requirements within its Regulation 2, Open Outdoor Burning regarding what can be burned, pile size, volume and controls.<sup>3</sup> Air Quality permits for residential burning should assist the District in reducing the burning of unapproved combustibles and complaints from the public. The District's Regulations are available online at mendoair.org.<sup>4</sup>

The District is committed to supporting community understanding of how to best manage smoke related to open outdoor burning. Therefore, as of May 1, 2019, the District will be providing information to the public regarding the requirement for Air Quality permits year-round for all open outdoor burning. The District has competent staff and an administrative process, along with regular office hours available to the public for processing air quality permits and issuing smoke management plans to strive for the least possible impact on the public.

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<sup>2</sup> Note that Residential burning is burning that is done to remove vegetative waste that is not associated with agricultural activities, (which includes water conveyance or forest health).

<sup>3</sup> The District permit system is authorized under California Health and Safety Code, Section 42804(c).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/aqmd/district-regulation-2.html>

The District is requesting that collaborating fire agencies and local governments direct the public to the District office and/or website for more information.

The District looks forward to working with all public agency partners on agricultural and prescribed burning, including the important prescribed fire projects that are needed in Mendocino County.

Thank you for your attention and please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.



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