

Seattle
State Office
2625 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98121
P: (206) 441-5100
F: (206) 441-3277

Spokane
1817 E. Springfield, Suite E
Spokane, WA 99202
P: (509) 325-6516
F: (509) 323-5380

Tacoma
223 Tacoma Ave S.
Tacoma, WA 98402
P: (253) 272-8777
F: (253) 593-8827

Yakima
110 S. 9th Avenue
Yakima, WA 98902
P: (509) 248-4384
F: (509) 248-4943

W: www.alaw.org

1-800-LUNG-USA
(1-800-586-4872)

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One Breath
at a Time**

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Contact:

Paul Payton, Director of Communications, American Lung Association of Washington
(206) 441-5100

Alice Collingwood, Communications Manager, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
(206) 689-4043

Successful Wood Stove Changeout Programs Help to Clear the Air National American Lung Association Report Doesn't Tell the Full Story

SEATTLE – More than 250 dirty old wood stoves are being replaced through a successful collaborative program among several organizations, including the American Lung Association of Washington and the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency. So why has the national American Lung Association given the Puget Sound region less than stellar grades for its air quality?

Locally, Puget Sound counties did not receive good grades for PM2.5 – King County received a C, while Snohomish received a D and Pierce an F grade. For ozone, both King and Pierce counties received a C. Snohomish County doesn't have an ozone monitoring station since highest ozone levels tend to occur south of the Seattle metropolitan area.

"The report doesn't tell the full story," said Linda Henderson, Executive Director of the American Lung Association of Washington. "It is based on older data and doesn't account for successful efforts like this region's wood stove changeout program. However, it does acknowledge our concerns about the quality of the air we breathe."

Dennis McLerran, Executive Director of the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, concurs.

"While we don't agree with the national American Lung Association's grading system for its report, which penalizes us for just a few poor air quality days each year, we do agree that we have more work to do to ensure healthy air all year for all people," McLerran said.

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The report used data from monitored air quality for 2004-2006. The ozone grades were based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 1997 standard for ozone, a precursor of smog and a summertime problem, rather than the new tighter standard announced on March 12, 2008.

"If we were to measure the number of unhealthy days against the new ozone standard, it would show that pollution is worse than the report indicates," Henderson said. "Even with these stricter ozone standards, Puget Sound residents are being denied the health protection they deserve under the Clean Air Act."

The report has given ozone grades for a number of years but only more recently included data for PM2.5, a more significant air pollution issue for the Puget Sound region, particularly during the winter months. One area, the Wapato Hills/Puyallup River Valley area in Pierce County, is in nonattainment of the federal PM2.5 air quality standard and two others in Snohomish County are at risk.

"That's the reason for our emphasis on wood stoves in our region," McLerran said. "However, we also are concerned that the new ozone standard will pose some challenges for us, particularly if we have hot, sunny weather this summer. We could be at risk for violating the new ozone standard as well."

Old wood stoves are a problem because they are inefficient, waste fuel, create soot inside the home and can contribute to unhealthy indoor air because of excessive wood smoke. These old stoves also pollute the outdoor air in residential neighborhoods, creating a community health issue.

"By replacing wood stoves or fireplace inserts, we not only improve our air quality, but we can also improve our health, especially for those living with asthma, lung and heart diseases," Henderson said.

The Puget Sound Wood Stove Replacement program was one of several statewide, which were funded by the Washington Department of Ecology and aimed at reducing the impact of wood smoke in our communities.

Locally, the program was managed by the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, which offered financial incentives for residents of Marysville, Tacoma and parts of Pierce County to help them replace old wood stoves with cleaner devices. Most opted for natural gas, the cleanest choice. While the current program ended April 30, the Clean Air Agency expects additional funding from the Department of Ecology for more replacements in targeted areas. For more information about this program, visit www.pscleanair.org/woodstove.replacement

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To read the *American Lung Association State of the Air 2008* report and to learn how you can protect yourself and your family from air pollution, go to www.alaw.org

About the American Lung Association of Washington

Beginning our second century, the American Lung Association of Washington is the leading organization working to prevent lung disease and promote lung health. Lung disease death rates continue to increase while other leading causes of death have declined. The American Lung Association of Washington funds vital research on the causes of and treatments for lung disease. With the generous support of the public, the American Lung Association is “Improving life, one breath at a time.” For more information about the American Lung Association of Washington or to support the work it does, call 1-800-732-9339 or log on to www.alaw.org

About the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency serves the people of King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties. We work together to clean the air we breathe and protect our climate through education, incentives and enforcement. To learn more about our work, and how you can be a part of it, too, visit us at www.pscleanair.org .

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