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**Outdoor Air Quality**

**Poor air quality affects your health.**

**Learn how you can improve the air–and your health.**

* Your age, general health, and the amount and length of exposure to smoke determines whether you will experience smoke-related health problems.
* When smoke levels are high, even healthy people may experience symptoms.
* Smoke can also affect indoor air quality in businesses and buildings like schools, hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and offices.
  + When smoke levels are heavy outdoors, a large amount of smoke can get indoors, even when you close windows and doors.
* Commercial buildings and schools air filtration systems’ draw in the outdoor air. Standard HVAC air filters don’t remove most of the ultra-fine smoke particles. MERV 13, or equivalent, high efficiency air filters can help remove particulates from the air.

**10 ways to improve air quality and protect your health:**

* 1. Sign up for burn ban alerts and abide by them. Know when air quality conditions become stagnant!
  2. Burn seasoned, dry wood to release the least possible amount of smoke. Avoid:
     + Wet wood—It produces a lot of smoke and won’t burn efficiently.
     + Treated or painted wood—It will produce very toxic chemicals if burned.
     + Burning cardboard or papers you want to get rid of—Recycle instead.
  3. Dispose of yard clippings properly—Outdoor burning is illegal in most of Pierce County.
  4. Take a break from the driver’s seat when possible—Public transit, carpool, biking or walking can be an enjoyable way to reduce emissions.
  5. Combine errands to save gas—Reduce exhaust fumes if you need to drive.
  6. [Be Idle Free](https://tpchd.org/healthy-homes/outdoor-air-quality/idle-free-253/)—Switch off your car when you idle for more than 10 seconds.
  7. Slow down when you drive and keep a consistent foot on the gas—Speeding and slamming on your brakes wastes fuel.
  8. Keep your vehicle’s engine and tire pressure in top condition—A well-maintained vehicle produces less pollution.
  9. Avoid garden tools that run on gasoline—A push or electric mower doesn’t pollute like a gas mower.
  10. Be mindful of spillage when filling your gas tank.

**Resources**

* [Puget Sound Clean Air Agency](https://pscleanair.gov/244/Clean-Transportation)