

From: cafred1@juno.com
To: [ECC](#)
Subject: LETTER FOR NEXT MEETING PACKET OF ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE COMMISSION
Date: Monday, September 29, 2025 1:24:30 AM

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9-29-2025

To Environment and Climate Commission Secretary Sarah Moore,
Please include this letter in the packet for the next meeting of the Environment & Climate Commission, which I believe is October 29, 2025,
Please confirm receipt.
thank you,
Clifford Fred

9-29-2025

From Clifford Fred
To The City Of Berkeley Environment & Climate Commission

ALL WOOD & SYNTHETIC LOG BURNING SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY BANNED IN BERKELEY.

BREATHING WOOD SMOKE IS TERRIBLE FOR EVERYONE'S HEALTH;
WOOD & SYNTHETIC WOOD SMOKE WEAKENS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM,

PLEASE IMMEDIATELY BAN FIREPLACE, WOOD STOVE & FIRE PIT USE IN BERKELEY:

PLEASE IMMEDIATELY BAN ALL SYNTHETIC LOG PRODUCTS; THEY ARE EVEN MORE
HAZARDOUS & CAN CAUSE BREAST CANCER.

Not only in winter, but throughout much of the year, we are often subject to wood smoke and synthetic log smoke from other people's fire places, wood stoves and fire pits, including on official Spare the Air Days. Breathing wood smoke and synthetic log smoke is terrible for one's health and can be fatal.

It is profoundly selfish for people to burn when it's 65 degrees outside.

As Jimmy Carter urged many years ago, just put on a sweater.

According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District – BAAQMD, “during the winter, smoke from residential wood burning is the leading cause of air pollution in the Bay Area.”

Please enact an immediate ban on fireplace, wood stove and fire pit use in Berkeley.

Wood and synthetic wood smoke weakens the immune system, thus increasing the likelihood of contracting an infectious disease like the Covid Virus, and increasing the likelihood of dying from Covid if contracted.

WOOD SMOKE CAN TRIGGER ASTHMA ATTACKS

Breathing wood and synthetic log smoke can trigger serious asthma attacks. A serious asthma attack triggered from breathing wood or synthetic log smoke would likely be a death sentence.

There is absolutely no reason to allow wood smoke and synthetic log smoke in a densely populated city, especially a city like Berkeley with a temperate climate.

The following information is from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website -

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air/wood-smoke-and-your-health> -

“While people have always burned wood, we now know that wood smoke can impact the health of your family and others around you. It contains wood tars, gases, and soot, as well as chemicals like carbon monoxide, dioxins, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and fine particles.

People who frequently breathe wood smoke are at risk for serious adverse health effects. One source of health problems is the fine particles in wood smoke.”

“Wood smoke doesn't stay in one place; particles can travel far, affecting neighbors.

Scientists have studied health patterns among people who burn wood in their homes, people who have been exposed to smoke from wildfires, and people who live in developing countries where wood is burned for heat and cooking. “

“Short-term exposure to fine particles in the air can aggravate lung disease, trigger asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and may also increase the risk of respiratory infections. Scientists have also linked short-term exposures to heart attacks and abnormal heartbeats. Over time, breathing fine particles in the air increases the chances of developing chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD), chronic bronchitis, cardiovascular disease, or lung cancer.”

“Exposure to wood smoke may also be harmful to respiratory immune responses, leaving people more at risk for infectious lung disease. In high concentrations, wood smoke can permanently damage lung tissue.”

“When burning wood, it is not only your family and those near the fire who may be exposed, but also neighbors in the surrounding area, some of whom may have underlying health problems. Wood smoke particles are so tiny that they remain suspended for long periods of time and easily penetrate into buildings with incoming cold air. Young children, the elderly, and people with asthma, lung, or heart disease are especially vulnerable to wood smoke in the air.”

“Stagnant conditions and winter temperature inversions result in wood smoke staying close to the ground, where it can enter neighbors' homes through tiny cracks, open windows, and vents. Wood smoke often settles into low-lying areas, and can become trapped and build up to unusually high concentrations.”

HEALTH HAZARDS OF SYNTHETIC LOG PRODUCTS

Those horrible duralog & other synthetic log products should be immediately banned in Berkeley. They are nothing but chemicals and are even more harmful than wood burning.

The smoke and stench from synthetic logs can engulf an entire neighborhood. Besides making people ill and triggering asthma attacks, breathing this smoke can cause insomnia.

According to a report on the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health web site, synthetic logs are associated with an increased risk of breast cancer -<https://sph.unc.edu/sph-news/burning-synthetic-fireplace-logs-increases-breast-cancer-risk>.

Alexandra White, MSPH, epidemiology doctoral student at the Gillings School, is the author of the study, “Indoor Air Pollution Exposure from Use of Indoor Stoves and Fireplaces in Association with Breast Cancer: A Case-Control Study,” published online Dec. 12, 2014 in “Environmental Health.”

“Wood and synthetic logs are sources of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which cause mammary cancer in animal experiments. Both contribute to residential air pollution, but researchers found that only the synthetic logs were found to be associated with an increased risk of breast cancer.

“Certainly the burning of real or synthetic logs releases toxic pollutants into the air,” White said, “but we found that burning synthetic logs significantly increased the risk of developing breast cancer, whereas burning the wood logs did not.”

It is ridiculous to call synthetic log products “eco” just because they don't contain wood. DDT and arsenic don't

contain wood either. Are they therefore “eco?” Synthetic logs produce a horrible smell when burned, that can take over an entire city block, and can engulf neighbors’ houses even with windows closed.

Almost all burning in Berkeley is for ambiance, and not because it is someone's only source of heat.

Please keep in mind that the BAAQMD does not respond to wood smoke complaints except on Spare the Air Days, and rarely even then. Very few Spare the Air Days are called each year. Even if the BAAQMD gets a wood smoke complaint on a Spare the Air Day, they are terribly understaffed, and do not work on evenings, nights and weekends, the very time that most burning occurs.

In Davis, California and the entire State of Washington, it is strictly illegal to smoke out your neighbors.

The Davis California police department is charged with investigating nuisance wood smoke and can shut offenders down and issue criminal citations.

Please visit <https://cityofdavis.org/city-hall/police-department/code-enforcement/nuisance-burning>.

Also in Washington State, state law authorizes local police departments to shut down wood burning that is adversely effecting neighbors. Please refer to the Washington State Puget Sound Clean Air Agency web site - pscleanair.org - Legal Overview - Wood Burning and the Law.

A friend of ours in Washington State with asthma tells us that when a neighbor's wood smoke comes into her house, she calls the police. The police will promptly show up at the neighbor's house and order them to stop burning.

If Davis California and Washington State can make it strictly illegal to smoke out your neighbors, why can't Berkeley? In fact, our winters are milder than those of Davis and Washington State.

Neither the City of Berkeley Police Department nor the Berkeley Fire Department will respond to wood smoke complaints.

WOOD BURNING IS INHERENTLY DANGEROUS

Burning wood in a fire place or wood stove is inherently dangerous. In a typical 100 year old Berkeley house, the chimney can be detached from the house, the flue can likely be dirty and clogged, and the house of the wood burner could easily catch fire.

On an evening when the air is thick with smoke, people assume that the smoke is from one or more fireplaces and/or wood stoves, when in fact it could be an actual house fire.

With wood burning legal in Berkeley, someone who smells smoke will assume it is from someone’s chimney or wood stove – and thus not call 911, when in fact it could be a house on fire. If wood burning were illegal, people would be much more likely to call 911 when they smell smoke.

Loss of life can result because people would not realize they were smelling was an actual house fire.

It is difficult to understand how the Berkeley officials can declare a Climate Change Emergency, and yet be indifferent to the terrible health hazards of breathing wood smoke and synthetic log smoke.

I would also like to know why large new apartment projects on Shattuck Avenue near Hearst Avenue are allowed to have fire pits on the roof when wood burning has long been banned in new construction in Berkeley.

Clean air should be a Berkeley value.

Thank you,
Clifford Fred
Berkeley California