

Media Release

Environment Protection Authority



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SmokeWatch program increases public awareness

The Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) SmokeWatch Mount Gambier program will conclude at the end of 2011.

The three-year program, launched in 2009 to look at the effects of wood heater usage, has been a collaborative partnership between the EPA, City of Mount Gambier, Firewood Association of Australia, the Australian Home Heating Association and Department of Health. The campaign has assisted in increasing community awareness of air quality issues.

According to EPA Acting Chief Executive Tony Circelli, the program has provided an understanding of the sources of particle pollution in Mount Gambier.

"A study with the Department of Health and Flinders University has provided us with a sense of the health outcomes of wood smoke in Mount Gambier.

"Whilst the EPA is pleased with the outcomes from the program, we also acknowledge that there is no short-term solution for the issue and continued public awareness is essential.

"The EPA recognises the program partners, supporters of the program and the Mount Gambier community for their participation in the program and although the program is officially drawing to a conclusion it is the EPA's intention to work with partners to identify future opportunities to reduce wood smoke from domestic sources," said Mr Circelli.

Wood smoke still impacts air quality in Mount Gambier and the incorrect use of wood heaters can seriously affect local air quality.

"By minimising wood smoke, individuals can reduce unnecessary pollution, maximise home comfort, promote energy efficiency and reduce the health effects of wood smoke pollution," said Mr Circelli.

Key messages from the program include that only dry, seasoned wood should be burnt; air vents should be kept open for 20 minutes after starting and reloading the fire; the fire should be kept live and bright and allowed to extinguish at night; and there should be no smoke coming from the flue 20 minutes after starting the fire.

The 2011 SmokeWatch winter air monitoring campaign report and any future activities to address wood smoke pollution in Mount Gambier will be available on the EPA website in coming months

<http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/smokewatch>

For further information please contact the EPA Senior Media Officer: 0434 609 394