



NORTHERN
SONOMA COUNTY
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is an Air District?

An Air District is one of 35 local regulatory agencies in California responsible for ambient (outdoor) air quality in its geographic region. Air Districts are a form of local government, created by state law and separate from county and city government.

What does an Air District do?

An Air District carries out local, state and federal air quality programs which includes air monitoring, stationary source permitting, open burn permitting, performing compliance inspections, administering grants, and responding to air quality complaints.

Why are there two Air Districts in Sonoma County?

In 1955 the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) was formed and was originally comprised of the urban counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Sonoma County was included as an “inactive” member at that time. In 1971 the southern portion of Sonoma County joined the BAAQMD as an active member and the northern portion of the county was established as its own Air District, The Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District, primarily because of its rural nature.

Am I located in your District or in the BAAQMD?

The District border is complex and does not follow roads or other geo-political features. To verify if you are in our District, go to our home page (<https://www.nosocoair.net/>) and type your address into our mapping application. It will determine if you are located in the Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District or in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD).

How can I check the air quality in my neighborhood?

The District’s particulate matter and ozone monitors offer near real time air quality information on our “Air Quality” page: <https://www.nosocoair.net/air-quality.html>. For additional air pollution monitoring and forecasting information we recommend EPA’s “AirNow” site: <https://airnow.gov/>.

Can I burn my woodstove/fireplace on a “Spare the Air Day”?

Yes, if you are in the NSCAPCD territory. “Spare the Air” is a regulation of the BAAQMD in effect from November through February that prohibits the burning of wood in woodstoves and fireplaces on days that are forecast to have poor air quality. Our District does not implement “Spare the Air Day” at this time as we do not have this regulation, and our District is in compliance with all state and federal ambient air quality standards.

Are there any prohibitions on the installation of wood burning appliances?

Yes. Any wood burning appliance installed, or that transfers appliance ownership in the District must be an EPA certified wood burning device. A building permit is also required from the County of Sonoma that also requires EPA certification for installation.

Is my vehicle exempt from the DMV SMOG Check program?

Vehicles registered to addresses located within the District are exempt from the bi-annual SMOG check program. Vehicles brought into the District from another area typically require an initial smog check. There are some addresses that are located along the District border, namely in northern Sebastopol and Sonoma County addresses listed as Calistoga, which may trigger a smog check notification from DMV. If you are located in one of these areas you may contact the District to have a “Smog check exemption” letter printed stating that vehicles registered to an address in the Northern Sonoma County APCD are exempt from the Smog check program. The letter can be taken to a DMV office to verify that the vehicle is exempt from the smog inspection program. Please call 707-433-5911 to determine if you qualify for an exemption.

Is open burning allowed in the District?

Yes, with a valid District burn permit, on a permissive burn day, following all of your permit’s requirements. Only dried vegetative matter generated on the property may be burned on a permissive burn day. No open burning is allowed on a District designated “No Burn Day”. Requirements on how to carry out a compliant open burn are listed on the burn permit, including the phone number one needs to call to determine if it’s a permissive burn day. Barrel burning is always prohibited by state law. Burn permit information, including the ability to pay online for a burn permit, is listed on our website in Section 2, “Permits and Notifications-Open Burn Permits”: <https://www.nosocoair.net/permits.html>.

Does the District have “clean air” incentives or programs for businesses and individuals?

Yes. The District offers various Community Clean Air incentive Programs to help our region maintain its excellent air quality. Current incentives are listed on our website in Section 3, “Community Programs”: <https://www.nosocoair.net/community.html>.

Do I need to notify the District if I am removing asbestos from a building?

It depends on the type of building. The District implements the federal National Emission Standard for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for asbestos. Renovation or demolition of structures that contain asbestos require advanced notification to the District and must be carried out by EPA certified contractors. Specific information including a FAQ re: asbestos can be found on our website in Section 2, “Permits and Notifications-Asbestos Notifications”: <https://www.nosocoair.net/permits.html>.

Does my business need an Air Permit?

If your facility has a piece of equipment or process that emits to the atmosphere an air contaminant (something other than water vapor), you might, depending on how much it emits. Before you begin construction, please call the District for a free consultation with a member of our permit and engineering staff. Permit information can be found on our website in Section 2, “Permits and Notifications-Air Quality Construction and Operating Permits”: <https://www.nosocoair.net/permits.html>.

Does the District carry out compliance and enforcement activities?

Yes. District staff carry out routine inspections of sources permitted with the District and investigate air quality complaints. Violations of District rules, regulations or permit conditions may result in a Notices of Violation and potentially a financial penalty being issued to the violating party.

How do I contact the District with questions or lodge an air quality concern/complaint?

You may call the District office at 707-433-5911 or send the District an email by clicking the “Contact” link located in the upper left hand corner of the District website.

Can I attend an air district meeting?

Yes, The District holds approximately five public meetings per year rotating among locations in Healdsburg, Guerneville, and Cloverdale. The meeting schedule can be viewed on our website in Section 5, “Air District Boards”: <https://www.nosocoair.net/boards.html> or subscribe to our e-mail service for e-mail notification of public meetings.

How can I learn more about the District and stay informed about air quality issues?

You can visit our website and sign up for e-mail notifications regarding: Public Meeting Notices, Open Burning, and Grants by clicking on the “join our email list” located in the lower left corner of our website: <https://www.nosocoair.net/home.html>.

What are “chemtrails”?

The white trails behind an aircraft are condensation or “contrails” composed of ice particles that form in the exhaust of an aircraft. Our District does not have regulatory authority in this matter. The Federal Aviation Administration has a website answering questions associated with this phenomena: https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/contrails/.

If you have any additional questions regarding any of the topics listed in this FAQ please give us a call at 707-433-5911.