

Lingering Questions (and Answers) from “Causes and Solutions to Indoor Air Smoke from Wood and Pellet Stoves” Webinar

Q: Do consumers still have access to purchasing non-EPA certified stoves?

A: All new, residential heating stoves must now be certified, but plenty of non-EPA certified are on the secondhand market and can be installed in all states except Washington and Oregon, assuming a local code inspector does not object. [For more info.](#)

Q: What is the proportion of homes that are using wood/pellet heaters? Can we look somewhere for the data or report?

A: The [Census' American Community Survey](#) and the [EIA's Residential Energy Consumption Survey](#) are two places where you can find data on how many households use wood heat. The Census does not distinguish between wood and pellet stoves and only counts stoves that are primary heaters. The EIA says there are about 1 million pellet stoves in operation, compared to about 9 million wood stoves. There is some discrepancy in estimates from different agencies. [For more info.](#)

Q: Bob mentioned that opening an upstairs window alone can sometimes reduce indoor pressure on the floor where the stove is located and cause leakage. Such reduced indoor pressure can also draw radon gas from the subsurface, hence opening another window on the lower level can enable replacement air to come from the outside vs. the slab. In monitoring AQI, do you ever include Radon as an agent to test for?

A. Radon is important to test for, particularly in places where it is commonly found. Not all indoor air quality monitors are equipped to test for radon. You would need to check with each manufacturer on whether a device records a radon value. For example, Temtop produces an AQI reading from PM (both PM2.5 and PM10), VOCs, and carbon dioxide readings. Some models also measure HCHO and CO.

Q: Have augers improved on the pellet stoves? My parents' pellet stove had problematic auger breakdowns.

A: We cannot say definitely, but on most brands, augers are not one of most likely repairs.

Q: Does anyone have anything to share about the 2025 residential wood smoke workshop coming up in March?

A: The workshop is open to federal, state or local agency folks, along with some non-profits. AGH will be attending and presenting. It's being held in Denver in early March. Email Danielle Johnson at Johnson.Danielle@epa.gov for more info.

Q: Have there been studies to show burning wood with EPA-certified is no longer like living with a tobacco smoker?

A: We are not aware of any studies comparing the volume of cigarette smoke in a home compared to wood smoke. In the hands of an expert, some older uncertified stoves can be run with virtually no smoke leakage. It is more about the installation and operator behavior than the age of the stove that impacts stove leakage.

Q: How would one of you guys define clean energy?

A. Good question. We can't answer for other panelists, but AGH does not believe there is clear, black and white definition, but it is rather shorthand for a basket of renewable energy sources. We believe, for instance, that even heat pumps that run on grids using 100% coal power are still good choices because they dramatically reduce the amount of fossil fuel needed to heat a home, even though they do not use any renewable energy. We also believe new pellet stoves overall provide far more environmental benefits than fossil fuel heating. A wood stove uses renewable, very low carbon fuel, and can be responsibly used in rural areas. We are big fans of solar and wind, but do not support cutting down forests to make solar farms, for instance, or placing wind farms in certain sensitive areas. With all renewables, location is important.

Q: Any thoughts / updates on a certified dry firewood supply program similar to the U.K. that could be applied to North America? <https://www.woodsurre.co.uk>

A: Fairbanks is the only US city we know of that has a similar program, but we think that many more cities, counties and even states should be looking to implement similar programs. [For more info.](#)

Q: It is illegal to use an antique potbellied stove with a nice shiny skirt to rest your feet on and a place on top for the coffee pot? That's the type I used for years without incident.

*A: It is **legal** to use old, antique stoves virtually everywhere in the US. A compilation of local and state restrictions of wood heaters can be [found here](#).*