

Cool Yule as Paris bans log fires

December 5 2014



French former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin warms himself next to a fire in his Matignon office in Paris in 1998

Lounging by a roaring fire on a cold winter evening may be one of life's simplest forms of pleasure for homebodies but this will soon be a distant memory in Paris as authorities ban wood burning.

The Ile-de-France region, which includes the French capital and seven other districts, has issued an order stating that residents in Paris will no

longer be allowed to use their fireplaces from January 1 next year to fight against air pollution.

A further 435 towns and cities will be banned from using open fireplaces, although they will still be allowed to burn wood in clean, closed-combustion chimney-places.

The smoke created from wood burning has been proven to contribute to air pollution and to public health problems such as asthma and other respiratory ailments.

Paris itself suffers from regular spikes in [air pollution](#). In March, the problem got so bad that authorities banned half of all cars from the streets and made public transport free for several days.

According to the regional environment and [energy department](#), the ban on log fires aims to help drop the number of small, polluting particles in the air which it says are responsible for 42,000 premature deaths in France every year.

But the decision has sparked anger, particularly among the capital's chimney sweeps.

"Of the 135,000 open fireplaces in Paris, 10 percent are used and even these are used only six to seven times a year," said Thierry Pujot of the Paris Chimney Sweeps firm.



The Eiffel Tower surrounded by smog in Paris on March 27, 2014

"Roaring fires are kept for family gatherings, Christmas, friends or romantic rendez-vous."

He said the decision to ban wood fires was "stupid."

"It would be better to ban diesel," he added.

There is controversy over how much of the damaging small particle emissions are caused by chimney fires.

According to the regional environment and energy department, wood burning makes up 23 percent of these emissions in Ile-de-France—the same proportion as vehicles.

Open fireplaces, meanwhile, contribute to more than half of the 23 percent as they emit eight times more particles than closed contraptions, it says.

But Airparif, which monitors [air](#) quality in and around Paris, says that 39 percent of fine particle emissions come from cars and only four percent from wood burning.

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