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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - OUTDOOR WOOD-FIRED HYDRONIC  
HEATERS

Introduced By: Senator William A. Walaska

Date Introduced: January 13, 2016

Referred To: Senate Environment & Agriculture

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "HEALTH AND SAFETY" is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 23.8

4 OUTDOOR WOOD-FIRED HYDRONIC HEATERS

5 **23-23.8-1. Purpose. --** The general assembly hereby finds and declares that outdoor  
6 wood-fired hydronic heaters, also known as outdoor wood-burning boilers or outdoor wood  
7 boilers, are a recognized source of air pollution. Unregulated emissions from outdoor wood  
8 heaters are known to have adverse health effects on the heart and lungs. The purpose of this  
9 chapter is to protect the public health, safety and welfare by reducing air pollution caused by  
10 outdoor wood-fired hydronic heaters.

11 **23-23.8-2. Definitions. --** The following words when used in this chapter shall have the  
12 following meanings:

13 (1) "Clean wood" means wood that has not been painted, stained, coated, preserved, or  
14 treated with chemicals, including, but not limited to, copper chromium arsenate, creosote, and  
15 pentachlorophenol.

16 (2) "Director" means the director of the department of environmental management.

17 (3) "Outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater" means a device:

18 (i) Designed to burn wood or other solid fuels;

1 (ii) That the manufacturer specifies for outdoor installation or in structures not normally  
2 occupied by humans; and

3 (iii) That heats building space and/or water through distribution through pipes of a fluid,  
4 typically water or a mixture of water and antifreeze, heated by the device.

5 (4) "Phase II outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater" means an outdoor wood-fired hydronic  
6 heater that has been certified or qualified by the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) as  
7 meeting a particulate matter emission limit of 0.32 pounds per million British Thermal Units  
8 (BTUs) output and is labeled accordingly, and does not, on any individual test run, exceed fifteen  
9 (15) grams per hour within each of the test rate categories.

10 **23-23.8-3. Seasonal prohibition and nuisance conditions.** -- No person shall cause or  
11 allow emissions of air contaminants to the outdoor atmosphere of such quantity, characteristic or  
12 duration that are injurious to human, plant or animal life or to property, or that unreasonably  
13 interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property. Notwithstanding the existence of  
14 specific air quality standards or emission limits, this prohibition applies, but is not limited to, any  
15 particulate, fume, gas, mist, odor, smoke, vapor, toxic, or deleterious emission, either alone or in  
16 combination with others.

17 **23-23.8-4. Installations prohibited.** -- Effective July 1, 2017, no person shall input,  
18 supply, distribute or sell, install or allow the installation of an outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater  
19 that does not comply with the emissions standard for Phase II outdoor wood-fired hydronic  
20 heaters as defined in this chapter.

21 **23-23.8-5. Manner of installation.** -- (a) Effective July 1, 2017, no Phase II outdoor  
22 wood-fired hydronic heater shall be installed by any party other than a person registered with the  
23 contractors registration board and licensed to install an outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater.

24 (b) A written application shall be submitted to the municipal building official before a  
25 building permit is issued. The application must show compliance with all applicable state and  
26 local building codes and local zoning ordinances, and must include a site plan prepared by a  
27 licensed land surveyor or professional engineer showing both the vertical and horizontal control  
28 measurements required by this chapter, indicating proposed boiler location in relation to all  
29 buildings on the site and all neighboring residences on all abutting properties showing their  
30 structures and swimming pools together with distances to all roads adjacent to the proposed site,  
31 and distances from the boiler to woods, brush, and flammable structures. The plan must include  
32 the prevailing wind direction.

33 **23-23.8-6. Permitted fuels.** -- (a) No fuel except the following shall be burned in an  
34 outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater:

- 1           (1) Clean wood;  
2           (2) Wood pellets made from clean wood;  
3           (3) Home heating oil, natural gas, or propane that complies with all applicable sulfur  
4 limits and is used as a starter or supplemental fuel for a dual-fired outdoor wood-fired hydronic  
5 heater;  
6           (4) Any other fuel approved by the director pursuant to duly-promulgated regulations.

7           (b) Outdoor wood-fired hydronic heaters specifically designed to burn wood pellet fuel  
8 with metered fuel and air feed and controlled combustion engineering that are operated according  
9 to manufacturer's specifications and that burn only wood pellet fuel shall be exempt from the  
10 provisions of this chapter.

11           **23-23.8-7. Municipal ordinances.** -- (a) Cities and towns shall have the authority to  
12 enact and enforce ordinances that prohibit the installation or use of outdoor wood-fired hydronic  
13 heaters in one or more zoning districts. Such ordinances may incorporate, by reference, the city or  
14 town zoning map adopted pursuant to chapter 24 of title 45. Such ordinances may establish  
15 setbacks and stack heights that are more restrictive than those established by this chapter.

16           (b) Cities and towns shall not have the authority to establish quantifiable emission limits,  
17 require testing, monitoring, or certification, or specify the types of fuels used; provided, that cities  
18 and towns may enact and enforce ordinances that address the use of permitted and/or prohibited  
19 fuels in a manner consistent with the provisions of this chapter.

20           (c) The provisions of this chapter shall be considered minimum provisions.

21           (d) The broad discretion vested in the municipalities to prohibit outdoor wood-fired  
22 hydronic heaters pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall not be interpreted in a manner that  
23 would permit the adoption and enforcement of municipal ordinances that would interfere with  
24 recognized agricultural operations that are currently protected pursuant to §2-23-4(a) of the  
25 “Right to Farm Act.”

26           **23-23.8-8. Local enforcement.** -- (a) The local building official shall administer and  
27 enforce §§23-23.8-3 through 23-23.8-7 or any municipal ordinance enacted pursuant to this  
28 chapter.

29           (b) The building official shall serve a notice of violation on the person responsible for the  
30 installation or use of an outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater in violation of §§23-23.8-1 through  
31 23-23.8-7 or any municipal ordinance enacted pursuant to this chapter. The notice shall describe  
32 the violation and shall direct the discontinuance or abatement of the violation. The notice shall be  
33 in writing and shall be served by regular mail and certified mail, or by posting a copy of the  
34 notice in a conspicuous place on or about the premises in violation.

1 (c) If the violation is not corrected within thirty (30) days after service, the building  
2 official may ask legal counsel of the municipality to institute the appropriate proceeding at law or  
3 in equity in a court of competent jurisdiction, including municipal courts, to restrain, correct, or  
4 abate the violation or to require the removal of the outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater.

5 (d) Violations shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500)  
6 for each violation. Each day during which any portion of a violation continues shall constitute a  
7 separate offense. The imposition of a fine shall not preclude the building official from instituting  
8 appropriate action to prevent unlawful installation or use of an outdoor wood-fired hydronic  
9 heater.

10 **23-23.8-9. Notice to buyers. --** (a) The distributor or seller of every new or used outdoor  
11 wood-fired hydronic heater shall provide each prospective buyer with a copy of this chapter and a  
12 notice containing the following:

13 (1) An acknowledgment that the buyer was provided with a copy of chapter 23.8 of title  
14 23;

15 (2) A list of permitted and, if applicable, prohibited fuels; and

16 (3) A statement that the municipality where the outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater will  
17 be installed may impose more stringent limitations on installation than those contained in this  
18 chapter.

19 (b) The buyer and the seller or distributor shall sign and date the notice when the sale is  
20 completed. The name and address of the buyer, name of the manufacturer, and model and date of  
21 manufacture of the outdoor wood-fired hydronic heater shall be included in the completed notice.

22 (c) The distributor or seller shall keep on file a copy of each signed notice for at least  
23 three (3) years from the date of sale. The distributor or seller shall make each notice available for  
24 inspection or copying by the municipal official responsible for administration of this chapter or  
25 his or her designee, or by the director or his or her designee.

26 **23-23.8-10. State enforcement. --** The director or his or her designee shall promulgate  
27 regulations to administer and enforce the provisions of §23-23.8-9.

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - OUTDOOR WOOD-FIRED HYDRONIC  
HEATERS

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- 1 This act would regulate the sale and installation of outdoor wood-fired hydronic heaters.
- 2 This act would take effect upon passage.

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