



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Oakridge Air?

The Oakridge Air program supports the Oakridge-Westfir community by connecting residents with resources that improve the area's air quality. Home heating upgrades, air purifiers, seasoned firewood, and education. The program is made possible through an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant as well as additional funding from Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

What is included in the Oakridge Air program? What is Oakridge Air going to do for the Oakridge community?

Home Heating Upgrades: Project funding will provide 145 or more homes with weatherization and home repairs, ductless heat pumps, and certified wood stoves. Upgrades are available for rental houses as well as homeowners. [Click here](#) to learn more about home heating upgrades.

Community Firewood Program: The firewood program will be expanded to provide 200 cords per year of dry firewood to the community, while offering affordable firewood to low-income, senior, and disabled residents. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Community Firewood Program.

Code Enforcement: The Oakridge Police Department hired a designated code enforcement officer with project funding. Officers are using an education-focused approach to improve burning practices and help direct people to available resources.

Community & School Education: The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council is working with Oakridge School District teachers to provide lessons and class activities for school children.

Air Filter Distribution & Installment: Public buildings, including the library, elementary, junior high school, and high school, have updated air filters to improve indoor air quality day to day and act as cleaner air spaces shelters during significant wildfire events. In coordination with local health clinics, air purifiers were distributed

to residents with health needs. [Click here](#) to learn more about residential air purifiers.

Why is this important for our community? Why is the EPA funding this work?

The communities of Oakridge and Westfir are consistently among the worst communities in the United States for air quality. Our communities sit at the bottom of a bowl of hills, where bad air doesn't move out. This makes our area especially vulnerable to pollution from old wood stoves, burning green, unseasoned wood, and wildfire smoke. Wood smoke contains tiny soot particles and is the primary source of our red air quality days.

Breathing in the tiny soot particles from wood smoke is harmful to human health and increases our risk of:

- Decreased lung function including asthma, lung irritation, coughing and difficulty breathing
- Heart problems

Oakridge residents suffer more than other Oregon communities from associated health issues from poor air quality. Local clinics along with support from Oregon Health Authority and Lane County Public Health are helping us understand how we can improve local health conditions with some of these project strategies including residential air purifiers burning correctly, and more use of electric heat.

In addition, when Oakridge doesn't meet air quality standards it puts our community at risk of limitations on economic development and certain business moving or starting up in Oakridge.

What is the timeline of the project?

This project began in late 2019 and will continue through 2024. Funding from the 2022 EPA grant will extend the program for two additional years.

Which communities and residents will receive the benefits of the program?

Funding for this project will be available to all residents (including renters and homeowners) living in Oakridge, Westfir and the greater unincorporated areas of the Oakridge-Westfir area.

Who is managing the project?

Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) was awarded the grant money. Through a competitive process, LRAPA selected Good Company to manage the project, along with local Oakridge partner, South Willamette Solutions (the nonprofit that oversees Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative). Good Company and South Willamette Solutions have supported the City of Oakridge in organizing this effort.

Who is partnering on the project?

For this project, many partners will participate but the main partners will be:

- City of Oakridge - Oakridge Police Department – Code Enforcement – Community Firewood Program Support
- Good Company and South Willamette Solutions – Program Managers
- Lane Regional Air Pollution Agency – Program Funding and Oversight
- Inbound, LLC – Community Firewood Program Processing and Sales
- Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council and Oakridge School District – School Curriculum
- Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative and Inbound, LLC – Community Firewood Program Coordination and Management
- Orchid Health – Distributed Air Purifiers and clean air information to patients

Several other groups have helped and will help in the future including:

- Homes for Good
- Lane County Economic Development
- Lane County Public Health
- Lane Electric Co-Op
- Regional Solutions
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Housing and Community Services
- St. Vincent de Paul's
- Senator Prozanski
- Sustainable Northwest
- US Forest Service

How will households be selected to participate in the home heating upgrade program? How can I sign up to be considered?

The home heating upgrade program is focused on three primary efforts:

- Reducing emissions from older, uncertified stoves and installing clean burning

stoves

- Providing high efficiency electric heat that can offset the need for wood heat
- Weatherizing homes to make them more efficient and reduce the need for heating overall

Home Heating upgrades are prioritized for homes that meet the following criteria:

- Sole source wood heating exempt list
- Low income residents
- Residents with air quality related health conditions (heart and lung ailments)
- Proximity to worst air quality

Are there local jobs that I can apply for? Is there an opportunity to help?

We have a need for local contractors who are familiar with weatherization, home repair, ductless heat pumps, electricians, and wood stove installations. If you are interested in potential work, please contact upgrades@oakridgeair.org to be included on the contractor list.

Where can I get more information?

You can learn more about the program throughout our website, www.oakridgeair.org. You are also welcome to [contact us](#) or sign up for our quarterly newsletter.