

VOUCHER GUIDELINES

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

Participation in the Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out program occurs in three phases:

- PHASE 1** Voucher Application – Submit a complete application and all required documents to the District for voucher approval.
- PHASE 2** Voucher Approved – Present your approved voucher to a participating program retailer and purchase and install your new device, or complete your fireplace decommissioning through a licensed contractor.
- PHASE 3** Voucher Redemption – Redeem your voucher by submitting a complete Claim for Payment Packet to the District, and the District will reimburse you for eligible costs, up to the approved voucher amount.

For any questions about the program, please contact staff at (559) 230-5800, or by email at grants@valleyair.org.

INCENTIVE LEVELS

The most recent amendments to the District’s Rule 4901 requires stricter residential wood-burning curtailments for three counties considered “Hot Spot” areas in the San Joaquin Valley: Madera, Fresno and the Valley Air Basin portion of Kern. Due to stricter curtailment thresholds and to encourage participation, enhanced incentives will be provided for eligible participants in those counties. In addition, as part of its requirements under Assembly Bill 617 (AB 617) to implement additional measures to reduce air pollution in disadvantaged communities, the District is providing enhanced incentives to participants who have residences located in the AB 617 selected Stockton Community and have access to piped natural gas. To verify if your residence is within the AB 617 Stockton Community boundaries, please visit the District’s website for the community at community.valleyair.org/checkstockton.

The eligible incentive amount is based on the physical address (“Device Address” on application) of the old wood-burning device that will be replaced through the program, and whether the residential property is in an area that has access to piped natural gas.

ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS	LOCATION OF OLD DEVICE	ELIGIBLE NEW DEVICE TYPE	INCENTIVE LEVEL
Residence WITH access to piped natural gas	Hot Spot Counties Madera, Fresno, or the Valley Air Basin portion of Kern County, or AB 617 Stockton Community	Natural Gas Insert/ Freestanding Stove	Up to \$3,500* + \$650 for eligible installation costs
		Electric Heat Pump	Up to \$5,000*
	Kings, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus or Tulare County	Natural Gas Insert/ Freestanding Stove	Up to \$2,000 + \$650 for eligible installation costs
		Electric Heat Pump	Up to \$3,500
		Low-Income	Additional \$1,500 for qualified applicants
		Fireplace Decommissioning (Funding cannot be combined with replacement options)	Up to \$750
Residence WITHOUT access to piped natural gas	Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare or the Valley Air Basin portion of Kern County	Certified wood insert/ Freestanding stove	Up to \$1,000
		Certified pellet insert/ Freestanding stove	Up to \$1,000
		Natural Gas insert/ Freestanding stove	Up to \$2,000 + \$650 for eligible installation costs
		Electric Heat Pump	Up to \$3,500
		Low-Income	Additional \$1,500 for qualified applicants

*Regardless of income

VOUCHER GUIDELINES *(Continued)*

REQUIREMENTS & ELIGIBILITY

- The replacement or modification of the open hearth fireplace or old wood/pellet device must result in the reduction of emissions.
- The applicant identified on the application must be the home/property owner, or the tenant currently renting the Device Address identified on the application, to be eligible to apply for incentive funding through the Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out Program. Tenants are required to submit a Rental Property Owner & Tenant Approval Form with their application.
- To ensure the safe and proper installation of their new device, applicants must acquire any necessary permits and obtain proof that the installation of their new device meets all local, state or federal requirements through a final inspection by an applicable authority.
- The old device must not be dismantled and be in safe, operable condition, with all original parts intact at time of application.
- **One voucher allowed per device address.**
- **Do not** make any non-refundable payments, disassemble your old device or install your new device until you receive a District Voucher.
- Old gas stoves, gas inserts, gas fireplaces, devices with a gas log or electric heating devices are not eligible for replacement through this program.
- New certified wood or pellet devices must be identified on the current list of EPA Certified Wood Heaters to be eligible for Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out. For List of EPA Certified devices please visit <https://cfpub.epa.gov/oarweb/woodstove/index.cfm?fuseaction=app.search>
- New gas fireplaces must be certified as heater-rated, which are tested using the American National Standard ANSI Z21.88/CSA 2.33 (*Vented Gas Fireplace Heaters*). Gas fireplaces that are designed exclusively for aesthetic and decorative use are **not eligible**.
- Old devices located in homes owned by local Public Housing Authorities are not eligible for replacement.
- Tenants in multi-unit residential complexes with more than two units are not eligible for low-income funding.
- The property where the device is to be installed must be located within the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) air basin, which includes the following counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and the SJV portion of Kern County.
- Installation of a new device must be conducted by the contracted Retailer, where new device was purchased, or a third-party contractor affiliated with that Retailer and under their direct supervision. Self-installation, installation by non-licensed contractor or a third-party contractor not affiliated with that Retailer is not eligible under this program.
- New device must be purchased from a contracted retailer by the applicant listed on the application and voucher. For a list of eligible retailers, visit valleyair.org/change-out.
- All old wood/pellet inserts and stoves replaced and removed through this program must be permanently destroyed by a licensed recycling/dismantling facility. Open-hearth fireplaces that have been replaced with a new freestanding stove or electric heat pump must be made permanently inoperable by completely removing the fireplace structure, or permanently sealing it. The open hearth may remain intact if a new stove is installed inside the existing fireplace. Temporary methods will not satisfy this requirement.
- Priority will be given to low-income applicants, those purchasing natural gas or eligible electric devices, and those that reside in an area without piped natural gas service. To be considered as low-income, applicants must complete and submit the Voucher Application and the Low-Income Eligibility Form for review. Forms are available at valleyair.org/change-out.
- The new device must remain installed at the device address for a minimum of three years.
- Incentive funding provided under this program is not for the repair of an existing unit.
- Electric heat pumps purchased through the program must be ducted (packaged or split) heat pumps or ductless mini-split heat pumps that are permanently installed. Electric heat pumps are not the same as electric fireplaces. For more information about electric heat pumps, please visit: www.energy.gov/energysaver/heat-pump-systems. Electric fireplaces, air conditioners, portable devices, and other electric (resistance) heating devices are not eligible for funding under this program. Applicants who have a heat pump project will be contacted by program staff and be required to complete and submit a Fireplace Decommissioning Form. For ductless heat pump projects, only one head is eligible for reimbursement.
- The eligibility of the applicant to participate in the program is at the sole discretion of the District.
- Before and after photos are required, see page 5.

VOUCHER GUIDELINES *(Continued)*

REQUIREMENTS & ELIGIBILITY *(continued)*

- “Decommissioning”, for the purpose of this Program, means permanently rendering inoperable. The Fireplace Decommissioning option requires that applicants render their wood-burning fireplace, insert, or freestanding stove permanently incapable of burning wood. Temporary methods will not satisfy this requirement. The following must be completed:
 - Freestanding stoves must be removed and disposed of at a licensed recycling/dismantling facility and all piping and venting must be removed and any residual openings sealed.
 - Inserts must be removed and disposed of at a licensed recycling/dismantling facility and the remaining open hearth or wood-burning firebox decommissioned according to those options.
 - Wood-burning fireboxes must be fully removed along with any associated piping and disposed of at a licensed recycling/dismantling facility.
 - Open Hearths must be either fully removed, have the interior wood-burning area sealed by completely filling with blocks/bricks and cement, or sealing off the top of the chimney with 1-2 feet of cement.
- Fireplace Decommissioning must be completed and invoiced by a licensed contractor. The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary permits and completing required inspections to ensure the project meets federal, state, and local requirements. Please see the Fireplace Decommissioning Form for specific requirements.

VOUCHER GUIDELINES (Continued)

OPTION 1 – DEVICE ELIGIBILITY FOR FIREPLACE REPLACEMENT

The old device must be located at a residence within the District’s boundaries. Applicants must submit an application and obtain an approved voucher from the District prior to purchasing the new device.

The eligibility of the new device is based on the old device type and whether the residential property is in an area that has access to piped natural gas.

LOCATION OF OLD DEVICE	OLD DEVICE TYPE	NEW DEVICE TYPE		
		Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert, Freestanding Stove or Fireplace</i>	Natural Gas/Propane <i>Insert, Freestanding Stove or Fireplace</i>	Electric Heat Pump
Areas with Access to Natural Gas	Open Hearth <i>Wood-burning Fireplace</i>	✗	✓	✓
	Non-Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✗	✓	✓
	Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✗	✓	✓
	Natural Gas/Propane <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✗	✗	✗
	Electric <i>Insert or Freestanding/ Wall-mounted Fireplace</i>	✗	✗	✗
Areas without Access to Natural Gas	Open Hearth <i>Wood-burning Fireplace</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Non-Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✗	✓	✓
	Natural Gas/Propane <i>Insert, Freestanding Stove, Logs or Fireplace</i>	✗	✗	✗
	Electric <i>Insert or Freestanding/ Wall-mounted Fireplace</i>	✗	✗	✗

OPTION 2 – DEVICE ELIGIBILITY FOR FIREPLACE DECOMMISSIONING




The old device must be located at a residence within the District’s boundaries. Applicants must submit an application and obtain an approved voucher from the District prior to any decommissioning work taking place.

Fireplace decommissioning Option 2 cannot be combined with Option 1 as only one voucher may be issued per address.

OLD DEVICE TYPE	FIREPLACE DECOMMISSIONING
Open Hearth <i>Wood-burning Fireplace</i>	✓
Non-Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✓
Certified Wood/Pellet <i>Insert or Freestanding Stove</i>	✓
Natural Gas/Propane <i>Insert, Freestanding Stove, Logs, or Fireplace</i>	✗
Electric <i>Insert or Freestanding/Wall-mounted Fireplace</i>	✗

VOUCHER GUIDELINES *(Continued)*

BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTO GUIDELINES

Photo Guidelines		Sample Photos
<p>Before Photos Two photos are required during the Voucher Application process (Phase 1) to determine eligibility.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) First photo must show the inside of the unmodified device/hearth, with all doors/screen open. 2) Second photo must be taken from floor to ceiling to show the old device/hearth with all original parts intact, and surrounding structures that will clearly distinguish the location of the fireplace in the room. <p>PHOTOS MUST:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Show device in its original location and have all original parts intact (i.e. panels, screens, etc.). For freestanding stoves, the Applicant must provide a photo with the pipe and ventilation system intact. b. Be taken before the installation of any parts for new device (i.e. new electrical outlets, etc). 	<p>Photo 1</p>  <p>Photo2</p> 
<p>After Photo One photo is required during the Claim for Payment process (Phase 3)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Photo must be taken from floor to ceiling to show the new device/hearth, and surrounding structures that will clearly distinguish the location of the fireplace in the room. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Please provide an explanation if the surrounding is different (i.e. major reconstruction, refacing of fireplace or new location). <p>NOTE: Your claim may be delayed if staff cannot determine if the new device is in the same location as the old device.</p> 	

ADDITIONAL PHOTO REQUIREMENTS FOR ELECTRIC HEAT PUMP PROJECT

Photo Guidelines	
<p>Before Photos <i>Ductless Mini-Split Heat Pump Projects</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Include a floor to ceiling photo of where the heat pump head is expected to be mounted indoors. 2) Include a photo from roofline to the ground where the heat pump is expected to be set outside of the house.
<p><i>Ducted Heat Pump Projects</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Include a photo of where the heat pump is expected be installed (either indoors or outdoors).
<p>After Photos <i>Ductless Mini-Split Heat Pump Projects</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Include a photo from floor to ceiling photo where the heat pump head was installed indoors. 2) Include a photo from roofline to the ground where the heat pump was set outside of the house.
<p><i>Ducted Heat Pump Projects</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Include a photo of the installed heat pump. For split system heat pumps a photo of both new sections is required
<p>Decommissioned Old Device</p>	<p>Include photo(s) of the decommissioned old device as identified on the Fireplace Decommissioning Form you completed for your project.</p>

ADDITIONAL PHOTO REQUIREMENTS FOR FIREPLACE DECOMMISSIONING PROJECT

All photo requirements are detailed on the Fireplace Decommissioning Form, and must be completed and submitted as part of the application and claim process.

VOUCHER GUIDELINES *(Continued)*

PAYMENT PROCESS

Payment Options

Steps

Instant Reduction

Only available to qualified low-income applicants who purchase from a retailer offering the Instant Reduction option. See the Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out Retailers List for retailers who provide this option.

- After receipt of an approved voucher, applicant purchases an eligible new device from a retailer participating in the Instant Reduction Option and only pays for the cost of the new device and installation that exceeds the voucher amount. Voucher amount is applied directly at point of purchase through the retailer to reduce the out-of-pocket cost.
- Applicant signs the voucher and gives the claim for payment packet to the retailer, who will submit it directly to the District for reimbursement of the reduced amount. For installations completed by a subcontractor (not retailer), applicant will need to submit a separate claim directly to the District for reimbursement of any remaining voucher amount.
- Applicant must ensure the claim to reimburse the retailer is properly completed, including but not limited to, signing all necessary paperwork, providing appropriate supporting documentation and resolving any issues pertaining to the purchase and installation of the new device.

Reimbursement

Available to all qualified applicants. See the Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out Retailers List for all contracted retailers.

- **Option 1 – Fireplace Replacement:** After receipt of an approved voucher, applicant purchases an eligible new device from participating program retailer and pays for the entire cost of the new device, including installation.
- **Option 2 – Fireplace Decommissioning:** After receipt of an approved voucher, applicant completes fireplace decommissioning through a licensed contractor and pays for the entire cost of the project.
- After making full payment, applicant submits a completed Claim for Payment packet, which includes copies of all invoices and receipts, to the District for reimbursement to the applicant.

Fireplace & Woodstove Change-out is funded in part by [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.