



Guidelines for Firewood Banks Receiving Funding from the Alliance for Green Heat
Updated December 30, 2022

Required activities

Use of safety equipment: Volunteers who use equipment purchased with this grant are required to wear safety gear as appropriate, including:

- Boots, gloves, eye protection when splitting wood with an axe
- Boots, gloves, eye and ear protection when splitting wood with a splitter
- Boots, gloves, eye and ear protection, and chaps when using a chain saw

Insurance and Liability waivers: All firewood banks must have their volunteers and/or workers sign a liability waiver. (The liability waiver must also include holding Alliance for Green Heat harmless.) This protects you, your firewood bank, and the Alliance for Green Heat, in the event of an accident and helps to educate and warn about potential dangers. We have a sample liability waiver that we encourage you to use, or you can use your own, and send a copy to us.

First aid kits: All firewood banks are required to have a Class A or Class B first aid kits on hand, which can be purchased with grant funds.

Age restrictions: Children under the age of 18 are not allowed to operate dangerous power machinery which includes chain saws and splitters.

Testing and reporting moisture content of wood: All firewood banks must have moisture meters and develop a system to regularly test the moisture content (MC) of their wood to deliver seasoned wood. AGH will provide a sample sheet for banks to start with.

Delivering seasoned wood: Firewood banks will do their utmost to deliver seasoned wood (less than 20% MC) during the heating season. Wood that is higher than 20% MC burns poorly, produces less heat and causes damage to air quality (particulate matter) and chimneys (creosote). Homes that put excessive smoke into the air from unseasoned wood, harm the environment and could impact the reputation of your firewood bank. For homes in towns or suburbs, the moisture content requirements are even more important, as the airshed for those homes is shared by more people.

Education and Outreach: We urge firewood banks to provide educational materials (we will share these with you) to wood recipients on clean burning practices, wood storage, home fire safety and opportunities for energy audits and weatherization services in your area.

Impacts of grant: We encourage you to share stories and photos about how this grant has benefitted your firewood bank. We will provide a sample press release you can use to help spread the word about your work, attract more volunteers, get more free wood and achieve your other goals.

Contract and Reporting: Firewood banks must sign a contract that spells out the terms of the grant and basic reporting requirements. The reports are simple and include basic accounting of your expenditures (with receipts for items over \$250), information about how much wood was delivered and other major outcomes of the grant, and your recommendations about how the grant program can be done better next year. Note that 80% of funds must be spent (or equipment ordered) within two weeks of receiving the grant funds.

Other recommended activities

Deliver kindling too! The dirtiest part of a wood stove fire and sometimes the most frustrating too, is getting a good fire going. A lot of folks simply don't use enough kindling, often because they don't have it handy. So, consider delivering lots of kindling (in boxes or paper bags?). Splitting wood usually makes lots of kindling anyway, so keep that stuff, let it dry too, and give it to folks with all the big pieces.

Training video: Volunteers using chain saws are invited to take this 16-minute online chain saw training course at [Safety Hub](#). AGH will provide log-in info.

Weatherization services

Many low income households are eligible to get [free weatherization services](#) that include furnace tune-ups, better insulation, and things like energy saving light bulbs, low-flow shower heads, etc. [Check this map](#) to see the eligibility rules and sign-up process in your state. We urge wood banks to help recipients of firewood check their eligibility and help them get signed up. This is one of the best things you can do for homes struggling to pay utility bills and a great job for one or more volunteers to focus on. Remember, firewood goes much further in a home that is not constantly leaking its warm air!

Please let us know if any of your firewood recipients have had a recent energy audit, we would like to be in touch with them to see if the auditor inspected their wood stoves. Many auditors don't and AGH will work with energy audit companies to encourage them to include stove inspections in their audits.

Home Fire Safety: Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors save lives. Many fire departments and/or American Red Cross offices are working to install free smoke alarms and carbon dioxide detectors and may be interested in working with your firewood bank. We urge you to check to see if homes you deliver firewood to have smoke and CO detectors.

Woodstove safety: In addition to delivering seasoned wood to needy households, we urge you to take additional steps to see if the wood stove of the homes receiving wood are not accidents waiting to happen. Many stoves in homes are very old, were self-installed and have seen better days. Some old stoves are still safe and others are not safe at all due to furniture or firewood too close to the stove,

smoke leaking into the home or other issues. You may be able to partner with a local chimney sweep or fire department, or you may have someone capable of inspecting stoves. AGH has developed a guide to doing [stove safety inspections](#).

Other Issues

Check if your area has “no-burn” days

Some cities and counties have higher air quality standards and may restrict when you can use your fireplace or wood stove. Check with your local air quality agency and [this resource page](#) from the EPA to see what restrictions may exist in your area.

Portable Air Monitors

One of the eligible expenses in your budget can be a portable air monitor. These monitors can give you, your volunteers, and your community minute-by-minute readings of air pollution in the immediate vicinity of the monitor. We like [Purple Air](#) monitors that cost \$250.

Weights & Measures – There are weight and measure laws that cover the sale of many commercial items. Since you are not selling firewood, weights & measures regulations should not apply to firewood banks but you should get acquainted with the regulations in your state to make sure that they don’t apply to your firewood banks.

Wood size – if you are finding that your wood is not under 20% moisture content, one strategy is to split it into smaller pieces. Smaller pieces dry quicker and are easier to burn. Larger pieces of wood are often wetter and produce more smoke and creosote. They require more tending of the fire and usually don’t produce as nice of a flame as smaller pieces. We recommend a maximum thickness, or diameter of 4 – 6 inches, depending on the size of the stove. Here is some general guidance for your volunteers:

- Less than 3 inches in diameter
No split (use as is).
- 3 to 6 inches in diameter
Split in half.
- 6 to 12 inches in diameter
Split into four equal pieces.
- Greater than 12 inches
Split three or more pieces off the outside edge. Split the remaining core piece to produce pieces within the 6-inch maximum rate used in this example.

Contact us: If you have submitted a grant application, you will be assigned a Grant Manager, and should direct any questions to them. If you have not yet submitted a grant application, send questions to: info@forgreenheat.org