Everyone loves to sit in front of a cozy fireplace — not surprising, given the role of fire in the evolution of our species. Hominids who hated campfires probably didn't survive to leave many descendants. Sadly, our Stone Age instincts are leading us astray. Firewood should probably carry the same kind of warnings as cigarettes.

Sam Harris at the Daily Beast summarizes the evidence:

> Here is what we know from a scientific point of view: there is no amount of wood smoke that is good to breathe. It is at least as bad for you as cigarette smoke, and probably much worse. (One study found it to be 30 times more potent a carcinogen.) The smoke from an ordinary wood fire contains hundreds of compounds known to be carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic, and irritating to the respiratory system. . .
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> . . . Children who live in homes with active fireplaces or woodstoves, or in areas where wood burning is common, suffer a higher incidence of asthma, cough, bronchitis, nocturnal awakening, and compromised lung function. Among adults, wood burning is associated with more-frequent emergency room visits and hospital admissions for respiratory illness, along with increased mortality from heart attacks.

So forget about that wood fire! You'd be a lot better off with a fake one, a gas fire or a video of a roaring fireplace. If you live in an urban area, your neighbors would also be a lot better off, since fireplaces are significant sources of air pollution.