



State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

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Before You Light It - Know Ohio's Open Burning Regulations ***Tips for Safe and Proper Storm Debris Removal***

As Ohioans continue their wind storm cleanup efforts, Ohio EPA reminds them that open burning of storm debris is in many cases prohibited or restricted. Protect yourself, your neighbors and your wallet by knowing what you can burn and where.

WHAT IS OPEN BURNING? Open burning is the lighting of an outdoor fire that doesn't vent to a chimney or stack. Ohio limits the burning of tree/leaf debris in burn barrels or open piles to prevent harmful effects on public health and safety.

WHY IS IT DANGEROUS? Open fires can release many kinds of toxic fumes. Leaves and plant materials release millions of spores when they catch fire, making it difficult for people with allergies to breathe and causing potential violations of health-based air quality standards. Open burning also releases gases that can damage paint and corrode metal on nearby buildings. It also can cause safety problems such as reduced visibility on nearby roads. Even more hazardous is the illegal burning of treated wood, asphalt shingles, asbestos, carpeting, vinyl, rubber, grease, petroleum materials and food wastes.

WHAT CAN I DO INSTEAD? Environmentally-sound alternatives include chipping, grinding, mulching, composting or drying for firewood. The final product can be used for landscaping or animal bedding. Tree debris also can be taken to a composting facility or solid waste landfill. Residents should use caution when disposing of debris. They should contact their community officials to find out more about local debris management. Ohio EPA is working with communities to discuss their options for safely staging and disposing tree/vegetative debris from the September 14 wind storms.

WHAT ARE THE RULES? Ohio EPA regulates outdoor burning in both restricted and un-restricted areas. In restricted areas (land within 1,000 feet of a municipality and areas within one mile of communities larger than 10,000 people), landowners may burn outdoors for barbecues, campfires and cookouts (clean, seasoned firewood stack 2 ft. high by 3 ft. wide). Landowners in areas outside of restricted areas may burn their own trees/leaves outdoors as long as specific requirements are met (i.e. burning at least 1,000 feet from all inhabited buildings on neighboring properties). It's important to know that branches/limbs can't be hauled off the premises to be burned on another site.

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ARE THERE EXCEPTIONS? Under certain circumstances, yes. However, to burn a prohibited material or set a fire in a restricted area, you must receive written permission from Ohio EPA before you begin burning. This may take two weeks. (Necessary forms are online at: www.epa.state.oh.us/dapc/general/openburning.html.)
NOTE: Ohio EPA has not granted waivers to open burning regulations in any areas recently damaged by the wind storm.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M CAUGHT? Ohio EPA has the authority to enforce the state's open burning laws. Violations can result in monetary penalties. If you have any questions, or would like to report a suspected open burning incident, contact your local Ohio EPA office or air pollution control agency. Contact information is available at: <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dapc/general/openburning.html>. In some areas, local burning ordinances are more stringent than the state's. Be sure to contact local officials before you decide to burn.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION? Ohio EPA offers more detailed open burning guidance at: www.epa.state.oh.us/pic/facts/openburn.html and www.epa.state.oh.us/dapc/general/OpenburningCommunityGuide.pdf.