



Frequently Asked Questions about **2007 Outdoor Burning Ban**

From Ecology's Air Quality Program

Let's Clear the Air about Outdoor Burning Changes

Q: What is outdoor burning?

A: Outdoor burning is burning of household yard waste, such as leaves, grass, brush and other yard trimmings. It is also burning to clear land of trees, stumps, shrubbery, or other natural vegetation.

Q: What changed in 2007?

A: Before 2007, outdoor burning was banned only in urban growth areas for cities with more than 5,000 people. Since January 1, 2007, outdoor burning is banned in all urban growth areas* (see below) in Washington.

Q: Are garbage burning and burn barrels banned?

A: Garbage burning and burn barrels are illegal everywhere in Washington, and have been for many years.

Q: *What is an urban growth area?

A: "Urban growth area" is a term used by cities and counties to define where home and business development is allowed. More development is allowed inside an urban growth area. For example, four houses per acre might be allowed in the urban growth area, while only one house per five acres might be allowed outside the area.

Q: How will I know if I'm in an urban growth area?

A: To find out if you live in an urban growth area, call your local planning department. Maps of urban growth areas around the state are also on Ecology's web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/uginfo/ugamaps.htm> .

Q: If I'm not in an urban growth area, can I still burn?

A: Each area has its own rules. Check with your local building department or county planning department to learn what is allowed in your area. All burning requires a permit.

Q: If I can't burn, what should I do with all my yard waste?

A: Call your local solid waste department to find out what options are available to you. Instead of burning, you could:

- Compost
- Chip
- Use curbside pickup
- Haul to yard waste disposal stations
- Hold community-wide or neighborhood cleanup days

Q: What if my community doesn't have any alternatives to burning?

A: Call your solid waste department to find out where you can take your yard waste until other options are available. Your local planning or solid waste department can apply to Ecology for a Coordinated Prevention Grant (CPG) to buy chippers, help haul yard waste, or pay for other alternatives. This money is a one-time grant to help communities start alternatives to burning. In the long-term, communities are responsible to pay for their own programs.

Q: Why can't I burn?

A: The Washington State Legislature passed a law in 1991 banning outdoor burning. Garbage burning and burn barrels have been illegal everywhere in Washington since 2000.

Q: What's wrong with burning?

A: Outdoor burning can harm health, the environment, and property:

- Burning pollutes the air, causing serious health problems. The smoke from burning leaves, grass, brush, and tree needles can cause asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, and lung cancer. Children, the elderly, and those with breathing problems are most harmed by poor air quality.
- Burning also pollutes our water and soil. Smoke particles fall into our water and on our soil.
- Backyard fires can destroy property. Backyard fires that get out of control set off most of the wildfires caused by people. You can be held responsible for the cost of putting out your out-of-control fire, which can be very expensive.

Q: What happens if I keep burning?

A: You can be fined up to \$10,000 per day for each violation. You can also be held responsible for the cost of putting out the fire. This can cost thousands of dollars.

Q: If the law was passed in 1991, why am I just now hearing about it?

A: Lawmakers voted to phase in the ban on residential outdoor burning to give communities more time to develop alternatives to burning. The ban was originally set to take effect statewide in 2001. It took effect only in communities with 5,000 or more people in 2001. In 1998, the Legislature delayed the ban for smaller communities until January 1, 2007, to give them even more time to prepare.

Q: If I live in a small town, is smoke really a problem?

A: Smoke causes the same health problems no matter where you live. Sources of smoke may be different from place to place. Smoke can affect the lungs, sting the eyes, and worsen heart and lung disease.

Q: Doesn't smoke just blow away?

A: Sometimes it does. It depends on weather and geography. For example, if you live in a valley, smoke settles after sunset when cool air drops down from higher elevations. This cool, dense air carries smoke from outdoor fires and woodstoves, and accumulates near the valley bottom. Although some smoke may escape through valley openings or gaps and spread to another area, most of the smoke remains trapped until the sun has warmed the ground. Then, the warm air rises and may carry the smoke out of the valley.

In the winter, the days rarely warm up enough to carry away the smoke, and more smoke gets added each day. Even on summer nights, smoke can reach unhealthy levels before being cleared out the following day.

Q: What kinds of burning are still allowed?

A: Farm and orchard burning (with a permit) and campfires are still allowed. The U.S. Forest Service is still allowed to do forest burning.

Q: Why are farm and orchard burning still allowed?

A: The Legislature decided to allow farm and orchard burning under certain conditions. Ecology issues burn permits to farmers and orchardists based on the reason for burning, the weather conditions, and the effects of the smoke on nearby people. Ecology gives advance notice about when burns will happen.

Q: Why is forest burning still allowed?

A: Forest burning is allowed because it helps keep our forests healthy. However, it is done under strict guidelines. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources issues permits for U.S. Forest Service burns. They work together using weather information to make good burning decisions.

Q: Who should I call if someone is burning and they're not supposed to?

A: Call the number listed for your county, below and on the following page:

<u>County</u>	<u>Call</u>
Adams	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Asotin	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Benton	Benton Clean Air Authority, 509-943-3396
Chelan	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Clallam	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
Clark	Southwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-633-0709
Columbia	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Cowlitz	Southwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-633-0709
Douglas	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Ferry	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Franklin	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Garfield	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Grant	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Grays Harbor	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
Island	Northwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-622-4627
Jefferson	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
King	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, 1-800-552-3565
Kitsap	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, 1-800-552-3565
Kittitas	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Klickitat	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490
Lincoln	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Lewis	Southwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-633-0709
Mason	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
Okanogan	Department of Ecology, 509-575-2490

<u>County</u>	<u>Call</u>
Pacific	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
Pierce	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, 1-800-552-3565
Pend Oreille	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
San Juan	Department of Ecology, 425-649-7000
Skagit	Northwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-622-4627
Skamania	Southwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-633-0709
Snohomish	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, 1-800-552-3565
Spokane	Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority, 509-477-4727
Stevens	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Thurston	Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, 1-800-422-5623
Walla Walla	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Wahkiakum	Southwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-633-0709
Whatcom	Northwest Clean Air Agency, 1-800-622-4627
Whitman	Department of Ecology, 509-329-3400
Yakima	Yakima Regional Clean Air Authority, 509-834-2050

On Indian reservations, call the Environmental Protection Agency, 1-800-424-4EPA

If you are having trouble breathing or if smoke from an outdoor burn is getting into your house, call 911 for immediate help.

More information is on Ecology's web site at:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/outdoor_woodsmoke/residentialburn.htm .

If you need this publication in another format, please call Tami Dahlgren at (360) 407-6800. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.