

Breathe ... Don't Burn!

Smoke from Outdoor Fires is Unhealthy to Breathe and Pollutes the Air



There are a lot of misunderstandings about outdoor or open burning in North Carolina. Some people think it's OK to burn trash in barrels because they've always done it that way. It's not. Others think it's always OK to burn leaves and branches in the fall. But that's not so in cities and counties that pick up yard waste.

The N.C. Division of Air Quality enforces the state open burning rules and many local governments have additional restrictions on outdoor fires. Violating these rules can be expensive -- with fines as high as \$25,000 or more for serious cases or repeat violations. Substantial fines can be assessed, even for minor or first-time violations.



If It Doesn't Grow, Don't Burn It

The basic message of the state open-burning rule is simple: Only leaves, branches and other plant growth can be burned – nothing else. That means no trash, lumber, tires or old newspapers. If local pickup is available, you can't burn even leaves and branches. Do not burn:

- Garbage, paper and cardboard
- Tires and other rubber products
- Building materials, including lumber and wood scraps
- Wire, plastics and synthetic materials
- Asphalt shingles and heavy oils
- Paints, household and agricultural chemicals
- Buildings, mobile homes and other structures
- Anything when the air quality forecast is Code Orange, Red or Purple

What is allowed under the law? Homeowners can burn yard trimmings if it's allowed under local ordinances, no public pickup is available and it doesn't cause a public nuisance. Yard waste must not include logs more than 6 inches in diameter and stumps. Other allowable burning includes campfires, outdoor barbecues and bonfires for festive occasions. Landowners or contractors also can burn vegetation to clear land or rights-of-way, provided that:

- Burning is done on the site of origin.
- Prevailing winds are away from built-up areas and roads. If winds are blowing towards public roads, fires must be at least 250 feet away.
- Fires are at least 1,000 feet away from occupied buildings.
- Burning is done between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and nothing is added outside of these hours.

Other occasions where open burning is allowed – with DAQ approval – include fires for: training fire-fighting personnel; managing forest lands or wildlife habitats; controlling agricultural diseases and pests; and disposing of materials generated by hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters. You may need a permit from the N.C. Division of Forest Resources or local governments before you burn, even for allowable purposes. However, such permits do not excuse a person from following the DAQ's open-burning rules.

Smoke Can Hurt You and Others

Why does the state have such strict rules about open burning? Because smoke and soot from outdoor fires can cause serious health problems and pollute the air. Fires also can burn out of control, destroying forests and burning down homes. Smoke from a burning trash pile contains many pollutants that can cause serious health problems and damage the environment.

Although smoke from a fire may not bother you, it could be a nuisance and serious health threat for your neighbors, particularly if they have respiratory conditions such as asthma or emphysema. Potential health effects include: lung and eye irritation, headaches, dizziness, asthma attacks, coughing and even death. For more information on the health effects of pollution from open burning, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Web site, www.epa.gov/, and do a word search for "open burning."

Do not burn on "Air Quality Action Days," when forecasts are Code Orange, Red or Purple. For air quality forecasts, go to www.ncair.org or call 1(888)784-6224.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

A lot of open burning isn't necessary. Brush can be composted, ground up for mulch, piled up for wildlife, or just left to rot. Newspapers can be recycled. Old attic junk can be given away for someone else to reuse. By making a few sensible choices, you can reduce the amount of throw-away material you create in the first place. The possibilities are endless.

Take a look at what you've decided to burn. Isn't there something else you can do with it? For more information about reducing, reusing or recycling waste, contact the Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance at (919) 715-6500 or www.p2pays.org.

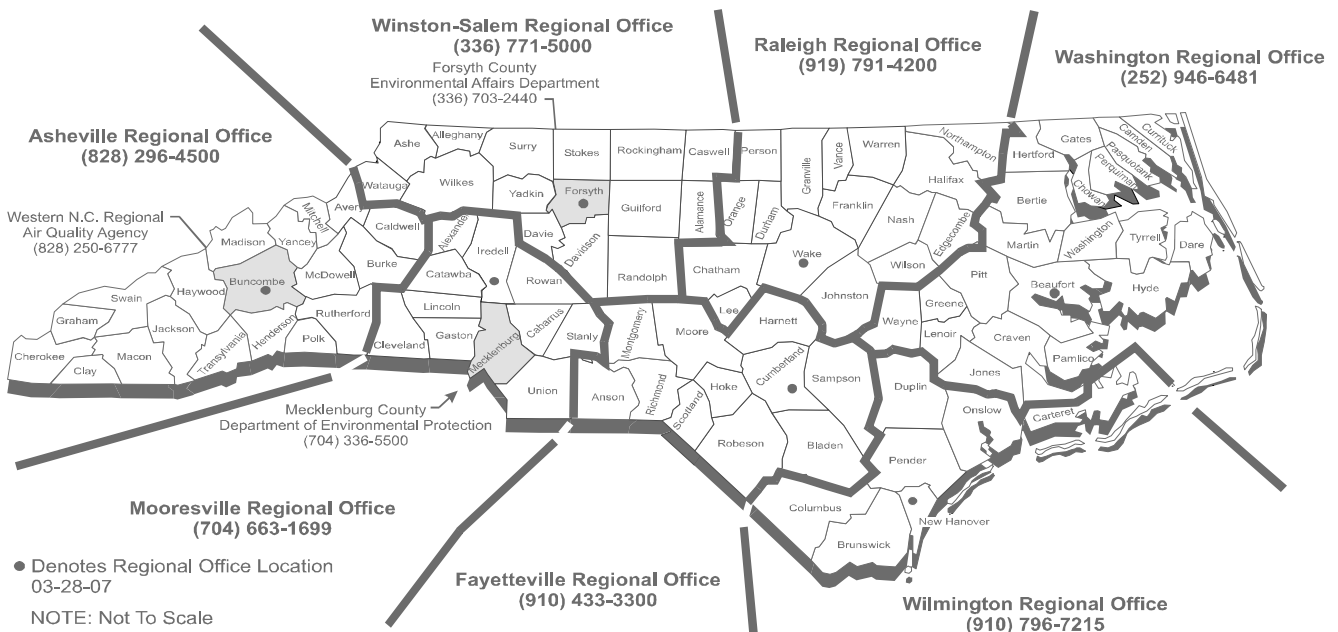
Plan Ahead

You don't need a special permit from the Division of Air Quality for allowable fires. However, you may need a permit from your town or local forest ranger. Open burning can be a nuisance, and local officials may establish rules to reduce that nuisance. Check with local officials before you burn.

Open burning that is more than 100 feet from your home and within 500 feet of a woodland normally requires a permit from the N.C. Division of Forest Resources. DFR does not charge for permits. If you want to start an outdoor fire, contact a local forest ranger to find out if and how you can get a permit. You also may contact DFR headquarters at (919) 733-2162 or visit its Web site, www.dfr.state.nc.us. The DFR is primarily concerned with fire danger, while the DAQ deals with air pollution. **Following one agency's regulations does not guarantee compliance with other agencies.**

The N.C. Division of Air Quality is part of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The DAQ is responsible for maintaining and improving the quality of North Carolina's air. For more information about the division and laws for protecting air quality, visit the DAQ's Web site (www.ncair.org) or call one of our regional offices shown below.

North Carolina- Department of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Air Quality - Regional Offices and Local Programs



● Denotes Regional Office Location
03-28-07
NOTE: Not To Scale

Michael F. Easley, Governor
William G. Ross, Jr., Secretary
1(877)OPEN BURN (toll free) 1(877)673-6287

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