

Open Burning and You

What is open burning?

Open burning is the burning of combustible materials in a way that emits the products of combustion directly to the atmosphere. DEQ has rules that address open burning and clearly identify when it is permissible and under what conditions. Open burning is prohibited in most situations because it can cause air pollution, which can be harmful to human health and the environment.

How does open burning affect public health?

Open burning produces smoke, a complex mixture of gases, and fine particles. The biggest health threat comes from the fine particles that can get into your eyes and respiratory system. When inhaled, these particles may accumulate in the respiratory system causing persistent coughs, wheezing, and physical discomfort, and may aggravate existing respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic bronchitis. Older adults, children, and people with heart or lung disease are more susceptible.

How does open burning affect the environment?

Chemicals contained in smoke, when mixed with rainwater, can speed up the deterioration of man-made materials such as concrete, metal products and paint. Open burning of rubber, plastic and other materials is prohibited because it can produce hazardous air pollutants such as dioxins, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, formaldehyde and hydrochloric acid.

Is open burning prohibited?

Open burning of refuse and combustible materials is prohibited unless conducted in accordance with DEQ rules. Open burning of tires is strictly prohibited. Additionally, combustible material may not be transported to, or accepted at, any property for open burning other than where it was generated, except as stated in number nine under “Is open burning permissible...”

Examples of prohibited open burning include:

- Burning your household trash when you have trash collection service available;
- Burning tires;
- Burning during a burn ban declared by the Governor or local government official; and
- Burning when an Ozone Alert or Particulate Matter Alert is declared for the county in which the burn is to be conducted. DEQ’s website, www.deq.ok.gov, will contain the message **No Ozone or PM Alert in Effect**, or it will state **Ozone or PM Alert**. Click on the icon to go to a page providing the details of what counties are covered by the alert.

Is open burning permissible, and if so, under what circumstances?

Open burning is permissible for:

1. Fires purposely set for instruction and training of fire-fighting personnel, with approval from DEQ (must submit a form to DEQ).
2. Fires set to eliminate a fire hazard and remove dangerous or hazardous materials when there is no other option and you obtain prior approval from DEQ.
3. Campfires, ceremonial fires or outdoor fires for non-commercial food preparation.
4. Fires purposely set to forest, crops or range land to manage forests, crops or wildlife (may require approval from Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry).
5. Land clearing or right-of-way maintenance.
 - a. In Oklahoma City or Tulsa Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), an Air Curtain Incinerator (ACI) must be used. Counties in the Oklahoma City MSA are Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, and Oklahoma. Counties in the Tulsa MSA are Creek, Okmulgee, Osage, Pawnee, Rogers, Tulsa, and Wagoner.
6. Burning domestic household waste when no collection/disposal service is available.
7. Burning of hydrocarbons spilled or generated as waste from oil field activities which cannot be feasibly recovered otherwise.
 - a. DEQ must be notified prior to the burn; however, burning hydrocarbons on water or where the residue will wash into waters of the state is prohibited.
8. Disposal of waste hydrocarbons through use of a flare.
9. Burning transported clean lumber, and clean wood waste, yard brush, or material from land clearing operations:
 - a. using an ACI that has been properly designed and operated to control smoke and particulate matter, if the burning is performed in the OKC or Tulsa MSA, or
 - b. without an ACI if the burning is location outside of either MSA.
10. Burning yard brush on the property where it was generated.
11. Burning of the parts of medical marijuana plants exempted from the term “Medical Marijuana Waste” as defined in Oklahoma Statutes at Section 428 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Waste Management Act.

Permissible open burning must be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, ordinances and rules. In all instances, permissible open burning must not create a public nuisance nor are persons conducting the open burning exempt from consequences, damages or injuries resulting from the burn.

Disaster Relief

The DEQ Executive Director may allow open burning of debris resulting from a disaster if it is determined such burning is necessary to protect public health and safety. Such approval, if granted, shall be accompanied by appropriate guidelines for burning the debris.

Open Burning Complaints

DEQ investigates all complaints of open burning. Our complaints hotline phone number is 1-800-522-0206. Not all instances of open burning constitute a violation; however, when a violation is found, DEQ takes action to ensure the open burning ceases.

To view the DEQ open burning rules, go to the following link, and scroll to Subchapter 13, Open Burning: <https://www.deq.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/deqmainresources/100.pdf>