



# RESIDENTIAL FIRES IN RURAL AREAS

Benton Clean Air Authority, 114 Columbia Point Dr Suite C, Richland, WA 99352 509/943-3396

## What does this mean?

This is the outdoor burning of leaves, clippings, prunings and other yard and gardening refuse originating on lands immediately adjacent and in close proximity to a human dwelling and burned on such lands by the property owner or his or her designee.

This fact sheet is intended to clarify information about rural residential fires. For purposes of burning at residences, the urban growth boundary separates rural and urban areas. A rural residential fire does not require a burn permit but there are rules that must be followed that would make these burns illegal. In addition, there are other common sense rules that can assure a safe burn and minimize effects on air quality and neighbors.

**Permits from the Benton Clean Air Authority are required in rural areas for non-residential fires, which includes burning for land clearing, storm or flood debris disposal, weed abatement, and other outdoor fires.**

## GENERAL RESIDENTIAL BURNING RULES FOR RURAL AREAS

While rural residential burning is allowed without a permit there are still rules that must be followed and other common sense rules should be followed:

### Rules that must be followed:

- The fire must not include any prohibited materials. (See **PROHIBITED MATERIALS** section).
- The fire must not include vegetative materials (except firewood) **hailed** from another

property in an area where burning is prohibited.

- No residential fire may be ignited and fires must be extinguished during an **emergency burn ban** in a geographical area where:
  - ◆ The Washington State Dept. of Ecology or the Benton Clean Air Authority (BCAA) has declared a period of impaired air quality or
  - ◆ Appropriate fire protection authorities have declared a ban because of high fire danger.

- Fires are considered **unlawful outdoor burning** that cause any or all of the following effects

- ◆ Detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of any person.
- ◆ Causes damage to property or business.
- ◆ Causes a nuisance.



An unlawful rural residential fire must be extinguished immediately.

- If an **outdoor container** (e.g. burn barrel) is used for burning vegetation, it must:
  - ◆ Be constructed of concrete or masonry
  - ◆ Have a completely enclosed combustion chamber
  - ◆ Be equipped with a permanently attached spark arrester constructed of iron, heavy wire mesh, or other noncombustible material with openings not larger than ½ inch.
- A **person capable of extinguishing** the fire must attend it at all times, and the fire must be extinguished before leaving it.
- No fires are to be **within fifty feet** of structures.

- **Permission from a landowner**, or owner's designated representative, must be obtained before starting an outdoor fire on someone else's property.

**Other common sense rules, which you are not required to follow, but it is recommended that you should follow:**

- The **person responsible for the fire** should contact the BCAA for information on the burning condition for each day. Please try to avoid burning when the BCAA calls a no-burn day. A phone call to 509-946-0865 will give you the burn-day status.
- Try to **restrict pile size** to less than 2 cubic yards.
- If multiple piles are being burned, then **burn only one pile at a time** and let each pile burn out and completely extinguish it before lighting another. Keep piles separated sufficiently to avoid accidentally igniting several piles at once.

## PROHIBITED MATERIALS

The following materials may not be burned in any outdoor fire: garbage, dead animals, asphalt, petroleum products, paints, rubber products, plastics, paper (other than what is necessary to start a fire), cardboard, treated wood, construction/demolition debris, metal, or any substance (other than natural vegetation) that normally releases toxic emissions, dense smoke, or obnoxious odors when burned.

## ALTERNATIVES TO BURNING

Alternatives to rural residential burning are encouraged even though burning is allowed. Alternatives to burning generally follow the principles of reducing, reusing, and recycling of vegetative materials. Following are general categories of alternatives to burning:

- Composting of vegetative material that produces a useful soil amendment.
- On-site chipping or transport to an-other location for chipping. Chips can be used for mulching, pathways, roadways, or feed-stock for composting.
- Mulching mowers can reduce grass, leaves, and weeds to finely divided pieces that

mulch the soil surface. Mulching helps the soil retain moisture, recycles plant nutrients, eliminates handling of clippings, and generally improves soil health.

- Large amounts of vegetative debris can be avoided if vegetative growth is controlled and eliminated by mowing, herbicide application, or other means of mechanical or chemical control.
- Alternative vegetation management methods may reduce the generation of vegetative residue. For instance, on some sites vegetation may be left for wildlife habitat.
- Initial or revision of landscaping could be planned to minimize generation of vegetative residue. Naturally vegetated areas or xeriscaping are examples.
- Using garbage service or hauling vegetative waste to an approved landfill or transfer station.

## MORE INFORMATION

### Weed Control

- Yellow Pages: *Weed Control, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance*
- WA State Weed Association 509/547-5538
- Benton Co. Noxious Weed Control 509/786-6988
- Franklin Co. Noxious Weed Control 509/545-3847

### Landscaping

- Yellow Pages: *Tree Service, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance*
- WA State University Master Gardeners 509/735-3551 or 509/786-2226 or <http://gardening.wsu.edu/eastside>
- Internet
  - Search Term: *xeriscape, low water use landscaping*

### Chipping and Mulching

- Yellow Pages: *Tree Service, Lawn & Grounds Maintenance, Landscape Equipment & Supplies, Hardware – Retail*
- WA State University Master Gardeners 509/735-3551 or 509/786-2226 or <http://gardening.wsu.edu/eastside>

### Landfill and Transfer Information

- Waste Management of Kennewick 509/582-5121
- Kennewick Transfer Station Kennewick 509/586-7555
- Richland Landfill 509/942-7498
- Richland Solid Waste Collection 509/942-7497
- Basin Disposal Inc. (Prosser, Benton City, and Benton County) 509/547-2476
- Ed's Disposal (W Richland and Benton City) 509/547-2476

### On-Site Burial

- No restrictions in cities. Call if burying large amounts.
- No restrictions in Benton County on small amounts, larger amounts may need to be permitted 509/736-3086