Safety Tips for Open Burning Season



Open burning is prohibited in 22 Massachusetts cities and towns due to population density and proximity of buildings. Contact your local fire department to determine if open burning is allowed in your city or town.

Permits Are Required

Get a permit from the local fire warden or fire chief. Fire wardens determine when it is safe to conduct open burning on a daily basis. Weather conditions change rapidly, especially in the spring. Permits can be rescinded if conditions change suddenly, making it unsafe to burn.

According to Department of Environmental Protection regulation (310 CMR DEP 7.07), open burning must: be a minimum of 75 feet from all buildings; be conducted between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. from January 15 to May 1; and take place on the land closest to the source of material to be burned. You must also be sure air quality conditions are acceptable for burning by calling the Massachusetts DEP Air Quality Hotline at (617) 556-1021 or by visiting the MassAir Online website at http://public.dep.state.ma.us/MassAir.

Only Certain Materials Can Be Burned

- Brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris from **other than** commercial or industrial land clearing operations.
- Agricultural materials such as fruit tree and bush prunings, raspberry stalks, and infected bee hives for disease control.
- Trees and brush resulting from agricultural land clearing.
- Fungus infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available.

Burning Leaves and Other Materials Is Prohibited

- Brush, trees, cane and driftwood **from** commercial and/or industrial land clearing operations.
- Grass, hay, leaves, stumps, and tires.
- Construction material and debris.

How to Safely Ignite and Tend the Fire

An adult should always be present during open burning. Children and pets should be kept a safe distance away. Use paper and kindling to start the fire and add progressively larger pieces of

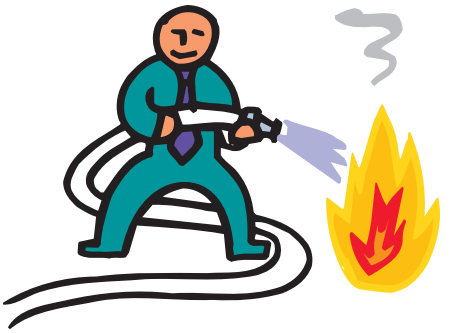
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wood. Parts of a discarded Christmas tree can be used. **Never use gasoline, kerosene or any other flammable liquid to start a fire** because the risk of personal injury is high. Burn one small pile of material at a time and slowly add to it. This helps to keep the fire from getting out of control. Select a burn location away from any utility lines.



Fires Must Be Attended Until Extinguished

An adult must attend the fire until it is **completely** extinguished.

Have Fire Control Tools Handy

Have fire extinguishing materials on hand including a water supply, shovels and rakes. The water supply can be a pressurized water fire extinguisher, a pump can or a garden hose. Test the water source before igniting the fire. You do not want to find out that the water is off or that the hose is cracked when you need it.

Watch the Wind and Be Prepared to Extinguish All Open Burning

Be prepared to extinguish the fire if winds pick up or the weather changes. Use common sense. Don't wait for the fire department to contact you to say that it has become unsafe to burn. Most open burning gets out of control during a sudden wind change.

Call For Help Immediately

If a fire gets out of control, call the fire department immediately. Use the utmost caution to prevent injury to yourself and others or any fire damage to your home.

People conducting illegal burning, or who allow a fire to get out of control, may be held liable for the costs of extinguishing the fire in addition to fines or imprisonment (M.G.L. c.48, s.13).

April is the Worst Month for Brush Fires

April is usually the worst month for brush fires. When the snow pack recedes, but before new growth emerges, last year's dead grass, leaves and wood are dangerous tinder. Winds also tend to be strong and unpredictable in April.

Prevent Wildfires By Burning During Wet Snowy Conditions

Prevent permit fires from becoming wildland fires by burning early in the season. Wet and snowy winter conditions hinder the rapid spread of fire on or under the ground. Weather conditions and increased fire danger in spring can lead to many days when burning is not allowed.

Alternatives to Open Burning

Open burning releases large amounts of carbon dioxide, other gases, and solid substances directly into the air, which can contribute to respiratory problems. Disposal of natural materials is never as good for the environment as using them again in a different form. Tree limbs, brush and other forestry debris can be chipped or composted into landscaping material. Check with your local public works or highway department; many have chippers at the municipal recycling center or transfer station and will process debris from homeowners.