

Frequently Asked Questions About Open Burning

Q. Am I allowed to burn waste from my business at my household?

A. The open burning of commercial waste is NOT allowed. Once a waste is produced at a commercial establishment it is considered “commercial,” no matter where it is disposed. Therefore, commercial waste cannot be taken to a household to be burned.

Q. Is a business allowed to burn trees, logs, brush, and stumps?

A. Businesses are allowed to burn trees, logs, brush, and stumps as long as the burning is conducted in accordance with the regulations provided on page 2 of this fact sheet. Although open burning of this material is allowed, businesses are encouraged to consider other disposal options for this type of waste, such as chipping, composting, or burning the wood for fuel.



Q. What am I allowed to burn with a burn permit?

A. This usually depends on local ordinances and fire conditions in your area. Most burn permits will only allow you to open burn trees, logs, brush, and stumps.

Q. What is a burn permit?

A. A burn permit is required when the ground is not snow-covered and if the burning is not conducted in an approved burn barrel. The permit may be a written document or verbal approval via telephone (see the next question for where to obtain a burn permit).

Q. Where can I get a burn permit?

A. This depends on where you live. Residents living in northern counties can usually obtain a permit from their local DNR Forest Management District Offices. Residents who live in southern counties and more populated municipalities may inquire about burn permits through their local fire departments or municipalities. You can find out where to get a burn permit at www.michigan.gov/deq (click on “Air” then “Open Burning Information”).

Q. Am I allowed to destroy a structure on my property by open burning?

A. No. You may not destroy a standing structure such as a barn or abandoned building by open burning, even if it is to be conducted on your own property. Air Quality rules specifically state that a structure may be burned for fire prevention training ONLY. This means that even the fire department is limited to open burning a structure for training purposes. A structure should not be intentionally burned for any other purpose.

Q. Am I allowed to burn the remnants of a demolished structure on my property?

A. No. You may not burn a demolished structure for disposal purposes. This is considered to be “construction and demolition” waste and should be disposed of in a landfill that accepts construction and demolition waste. The landfill discussion on page 4 provides a web site that you can use to locate a disposal facility for this type of waste.

Q. Am I allowed to dispose of waste from remodeling by open burning?

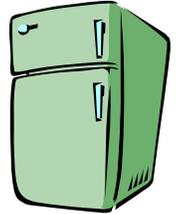
A. The open burning of waste generated as a result of a remodeling operation is NOT allowed. This is considered to be “construction and demolition” waste and should be disposed of in a landfill that accepts construction and demolition waste. The landfill discussion on page 4 provides a web site that you can use to locate a disposal facility for this type of waste.

Q. How do I dispose of old furniture?

A. Consider donating used furniture to a local organization (such as the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, or Civic Players). You may also try reconditioning the item. If the furniture cannot be donated or reconditioned it should be disposed of in a landfill (see the landfill discussion on page 4).

Q. How do I dispose of old appliances?

A. Consider donating the appliance to a local organization. Appliances containing refrigerants (such as air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, and dehumidifiers) must have the refrigerant removed before disposal. Only a technician certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may remove refrigerants from appliances and cooling systems. To contact an EPA certified technician look on the Internet or in your phone book under Heating and Cooling, Air Conditioning Repair, etc. When the refrigerant has been removed, the technician will place a sticker on it that indicates the refrigerant has been removed. Most disposal facilities do not accept refrigerators, freezers, or air conditioners without this sticker.



Q. What kind of health effects can open burning have on my family?

A. The smoke drifting from a pile of burning debris may seem harmless, yet this is the visible byproduct of a basic chemical reaction. As the waste burns, the chemical compounds present in solid form are transformed into fine particulate and gases which are emitted into the air we breathe. In addition to eye, lung, and nose irritation, the pollution created by open burning poses a serious threat to many that suffer from asthma and other respiratory conditions. The particles emitted can aggravate the respiratory system and cause the symptoms of some allergies and asthma to worsen. Many waste products such as treated lumber, materials with inks or paints, and plastics release toxic chemicals when burned. For more information about the health effects of open burning see the DEQ’s Air Quality Division publication “*Burning Household Waste – A Source of Air Pollution in Michigan.*” You can access it on the Internet at www.michigan.gov/deq (click on “Air” then “Open Burning Information”).

Q. What are the alternatives to burning or landfilling leaves and grass clippings?

A. Try using some of these strategies:

When mowing, don’t bag the clippings. Leave them on the ground instead or use a compost mower.

Put yard debris and vegetable matter back into the soil.

Start a compost pile. The decomposed matter that results is a very nutrient rich substance that can be used as fertilizer.

Use chipped yard waste as landscaping mulch.

Take waste to a composting facility (many communities have special pick-ups for this).

Some communities have leaf collection programs. Check into the services your community offers.



Q. Is it okay to burn pressure treated lumber?

A. No. Most pressure treated lumber contains toxic ingredients like arsenic that would be released into the air if burned. Treated lumber waste should be taken to an appropriate landfill for disposal. For more information about wood pressure treated with Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) go to www.michigan.gov/deq (click on “Air” then “Open Burning Information”).

Q. Am I allowed to use scrap tires to ignite a brush pile?

A. The open burning of tires is NOT allowed. The pollution emitted from this practice is highly toxic and the thick black smoke produced obscures vision. Consider using natural or non-toxic materials to ignite your brush pile. Many burn permits will identify acceptable or restricted accelerants that can be used.

Q. How do I dispose of tires?

A. Scrap tires should be taken to a licensed tire disposal facility. Be aware that there are regulations that restrict who can haul scrap tires and how long scrap tires can be stored at a location that is not permitted. For more information about scrap tire disposal go to www.michigan.gov/deq (click on “Waste” then “Scrap Tires”).



Q. Is the open burning of empty fertilizer packaging or pesticide containers allowed in agricultural operations?

A. The open burning of empty fertilizer packaging or empty pesticide containers from agricultural operations is NOT allowed. Consider recycling as an alternative. Many elevators throughout the state will accept empty containers for recycling. The “Michigan Clean Sweep Program” administered by Michigan’s Department of Agriculture (MDA), allows farmers to dispose of unused and unwanted pesticides. The MDA’s web site has more information at www.michigan.gov/mda (click on “Consumer Information,” “Environment,” then “Recycling”). The MDA’s Environmental Stewardship Division administers a number of other programs to help farmers with pollution prevention strategies, recycling, composting, and ground water stewardship.



Q. Is the open burning of manure allowed?

A. The open burning of manure is NOT allowed under the air quality regulations. In addition, this practice does not conform with the Michigan Commission of Agriculture Adopted Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for Manure Management and Utilization. For more information about GAAMPs visit the Michigan Department of Agriculture’s web site at www.michigan.gov/mda (click on “Farming,” “Environment,” then “GAAMPs”).

Q. Am I allowed to open burn livestock carcasses?

A. The open burning of livestock carcasses is not allowed under Part 55 of Act 451. According to The Bodies of Dead Animals Act, Public Act 239 of 1982, as amended, livestock carcasses should be disposed of by burial, composting, rendering, or incineration. You will have to obtain a Permit to Install from the DEQ’s Air Quality Division before constructing and operating an incinerator. For information about burial, composting, or rendering animal carcasses check out the MDA’s publication entitled “Proper Disposal of Animal Carcasses in Michigan,” which can be viewed on the internet at www.michigan.gov/mda. For questions about the proper disposal of animal carcasses, contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (800) 292-3939.