

Outdoor Burning Permit Information

Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties

Reprinted October 2009



Serving Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties

Air is Essential to Life.

Yet most of us don't think about the purity of the air we breathe...

at least not until there is something wrong with it. It is the Northwest Clean Air Agency's responsibility to ensure that you have clean air to breathe. While we usually have excellent air quality, our population continues to grow, putting added pressure on our ability to maintain good air quality. With your help, we can continue to enjoy clean air.

Please consider alternatives to burning like composting and chipping. Our website www.nwcleanair.org contains information about alternatives to burning in your area.

General Outdoor Burning Rules

Applies to All Types of Burning

[State outdoor burning rule — WAC 173-425]

- **What can be burned?** — It is only legal to burn natural vegetation or firewood—not even paper is allowed (except for the amount necessary to start a fire).
- **Burn barrels** — The use of burn barrels is prohibited statewide.
- **Construction and demolition debris** — No material resulting from a construction, renovation or demolition project can legally be burned.
- **Nuisance** — Smoke, odor or ash that unreasonably impacts neighboring properties is prohibited.
- **It is illegal to burn any material that is not generated on site** or is hauled from an area where burning of the material is prohibited.
- **Commercial businesses** — Burning at permanently located commercial establishments is prohibited except for land-clearing operations where burning is allowed. [NWCAA Section 502.8]
- **Burning is allowed during daylight hours only** (except recreational fires) unless otherwise permitted by the Fire Warden.
- **Do not burn during periods of air stagnation.**
- **Burn only when winds do not exceed 7–10 mph.**
- **Most types of burning are not allowed during a burn ban.**
 - ▶ See page 8–9 for burn ban information.

Burning garbage has been illegal since 1976.

Types of Burning that Require a Permit

Recreational fires — Fires larger than 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet high in Island and Whatcom counties require a written permit. Recreational fires consist only of charcoal or firewood that are used for cooking or pleasure.

▶ See page 4 for more information.

Residential fires — Fires larger than 4 feet in diameter require a written permit. Verbal permits are required for fires less than 4 feet in diameter in Island and Whatcom counties. Residential fires consist of leaves, clippings, prunings and other yard and garden debris that are generated on site.

▶ See page 6 for more information.

Land-clearing fires — All land-clearing fires require a permit and consist of natural vegetation generated from on site land-clearing projects.

▶ See page 7 for more information.

Silvicultural fires — Permit conditions vary by site and time of year and are determined at the time the permit is written. Silvicultural fires are forestry burns in which the land is to remain forest and is not being cleared for other uses. These burns typically contain logging slash following a logging operation.

▶ See page 11 for Silvicultural burn permit information.

You may be charged a fee if your fire department is called out to your fire due to illegal burning.

Recreational Burning

Permit Conditions

Recreational fires 3 feet in diameter or smaller do not need a permit if all the conditions below are met (unless there are additional restrictions in your area).

- Recreational fires consist only of charcoal or firewood and are used for cooking or pleasure.
- The fire is in an enclosure no larger than 3 feet across. The enclosure must be a minimum of 16 inches high and made of cement block, stones or #10 gauge steel.
- Materials being burned must be kept lower than the sidewalls of the enclosure.
- A charged garden hose or 2 five-gallon buckets of water must be on site.
- A shovel or rake must be on site.
- The fire must be 25 feet from any standing timber.
- Tree branches must be cleared to the height of 15 feet above the enclosure.
- One person age 16 or older who is capable of putting the fire out must be in attendance at all times.
- The fire must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground).
- The landowner's permission must be obtained if not on your property.

▶ **Permit contact information is on page 11.**



Residential Burning

Permit Conditions

Written permits are required for fires over 4 feet in diameter. Verbal permits are required for fires under 4 feet in diameter. The following conditions need to be met.

- Fires must not exceed 10 feet in diameter.
- A shovel or rake must be on site.
- For piles over 10' x 10'—a land-clearing permit is required.
- Water must be on site:
 - Fires less than 4 feet must have a charged garden hose capable of reaching the fire or 10 gallons of water and a bucket.
 - Fires 4–10 feet must have a charged garden hose or a 55-gallon water source with a pump and enough hose capable of reaching the fire.
- One person age 16 or older who is capable of putting the fire out must be in attendance at all times and must have a method to call 911 if needed.
- Only one pile may be burned at a time unless permitted otherwise.
- Do not burn during periods of air stagnation.
- All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground). The firebreak must equal the size of the pile.
- The fire must be 50 feet from any structure, standing timber or power lines.
- The landowner's permission must be obtained if not on your property.

► **Permit contact information is on page 11.**

Land-Clearing Burning

Permit Conditions

- ❑ Pile size must not exceed 30 feet in diameter.
- ❑ A fan must be used to start the fire and assist in burning.
- ❑ A shovel and rake must be on site.
- ❑ A 350-gallon water source with a pump and enough 1½" hose to reach the entire fire must be on site.
- ❑ One person age 16 or older who is capable of putting the fire out must be in attendance at all times and must have a method to call 911 if needed.
- ❑ The fire must be 50 feet away from any structure, standing timber or power lines.
- ❑ All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground). The firebreak must equal the size of the pile.
- ❑ Only one pile may be burned at a time unless permitted otherwise.
- ❑ Do not burn during periods of air stagnation.
- ❑ The landowner's permission must be obtained if the fire is not on your property.
- ❑ An excavator with an operator must be on site at all times during the burning.

► **Permit contact information is on page 11.**

Only you can prevent fires!

The #1 cause of forest fires in Washington is escaped debris burns.

Types of Burn Bans

Burn ban due to impaired air quality is a temporary ban on outdoor burning called by the Northwest Clean Air Agency or the Washington State Department of Ecology during periods when air pollutants are measured at unhealthful levels.

Burn ban due to dry weather conditions is a temporary ban on outdoor burning called by a fire official during periods of high fire danger.

Permanent burn bans permanently prohibit land-clearing and residential burning of yard clippings and other vegetative debris in specific areas within the counties.



Permanent Burn Ban Areas

Washington State law is phasing-out outdoor burning to protect public health. Residential yard debris and land-clearing burning is banned in all urban growth areas (UGA) and the following cities/towns:

Island County: Coupeville, Freeland*, Langley and Oak Harbor

Skagit County: Anacortes, Bayview*, Burlington, Concrete, Hamilton, La Conner, Lyman, March Point, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley

Whatcom County: Bellingham, Birch Bay*, Blaine, Cherry Point*, Columbia Valley* (Paradise Valley, Peaceful Valley, Kendall), Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack and Sumas.

To find out what alternatives to burning are available in your area, visit www.nwcleanair.org

* UGAs not associated with a city or town. Call your local planning department for UGA boundaries.



Could Your Home Survive a Wildfire?

Many homes are destroyed by wildland fires every year. Often, these homes could have survived had the owners taken preventative action beforehand. Don't let your home become fuel for a wildfire! Follow these fire prevention tips and become "FireWise."

The FireWise Home

- Maintain a safety zone around the house — i.e. remove flammable plants from around your home and replace with fire resistant plants.
- Build roofs and exteriors with fire-resistant materials. Put screens over the chimney and stove pipe. Clean regularly.
- Remove overhanging tree limbs, moss, and needles from the roof and gutters.
- Stack firewood away from the house.
- Keep storage areas clean and tidy. Never allow rags or newspapers to accumulate. Store flammable liquids in approved containers.



For more information on home fire safety visit the FireWise website at www.firewise.org or contact one of the following:

- Skagit Conservation District360.428.4313
- Whatcom Conservation District360.354.2035 ext. 3
- Whidbey Island Conservation District360.678.4708
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources360.856.3500

The FireWise program is sponsored by the Natural Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program and administered locally by the Conservation Districts and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.



Burn Ban Information:

Skagit County	360.428.1617	ext. 4
Island County.....	800.622.4627	ext. 4
Whatcom County	360.676.6934	

Permit Information:

Recreational, Residential & Land-clearing

Island County:

North & Central Whidbey (24 hrs)	360.679.7343	
South Whidbey (M–F, 8–4:30)	360.321.5111	ext. 7343
Camano Island	360.629.4523	ext. 7343

Skagit County:

Phone	360.428.3293	
Cell	360.391.0392	

Whatcom County:

Burn Information Line	360.676.6934	
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Verbal Permit Information

Island County.....	800.622.4627	ext. 4
Whatcom County	360.676.6934	

Silvicultural Burn Permit Information

Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties:

To obtain a written permit contact the Department of Natural Resources at 360.856.3500.

For information on burning restrictions go to:

Phone	800.323.BURN	
Website	www2.wadnr.gov/burn-risk	

Civil penalties may be assessed by the Fire Warden and/or the Northwest Clean Air Agency for violations of outdoor burning laws. Civil penalties range from \$50–\$14,000.



Serving Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties

For over 35 years, it has been the Northwest Clean Air Agency's job to ensure that people in our region have clean air to breathe. This is accomplished through the following programs and services:

- Asbestos
- Business Assistance
- Climate Change
- Complaint Response
- Enforcement
- Indoor Air
- Outdoor Burning
- Permitting
- Public Information
- Wood Stoves

For more information about these or other services, please visit us on the web at **www.nwcleanair.org**.

This pamphlet is sponsored by:

Northwest Clean Air Agency

1600 South Second Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5202

ph 360.428.1617

tel 800.622.4627

fax 360.428.1620

www.nwcleanair.org

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