

Open Burning and Disposal of Clean Wood Guidance

Background

This guideline outlines the requirements for the open burning of clean wood waste including brush material and clean wood waste derived from the demolition of wood buildings and structures. The Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment encourages alternatives to open burning such as mulching, composting or reuse of wood waste. Refer to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment's guidance document regarding [Construction & Demolition Waste Management and Disposal](#) for more information. However, some elevators or other wooden structures may be too large for demolition and disposal by conventional methods or have been used for purposes that make the building material unsuitable for reuse.

Many materials should not be burned at all due to the pollutants they can emit, including plastics, railroad ties, cardboard and pressure-treated, painted or varnished wood. Clean wood waste includes trees, brush/limbs and lumber or wood which has not been painted, stained, treated or preserved in any manner or fashion and has any associated hardware removed. Clean wood waste does not include upholstered articles; plywood or composite wood products containing varnish or glue; articles to which a rigid surface treatment is affixed or adhered. It also excludes and prohibits other materials from being open burned such as tires or other rubber products, plastics, heavy oils, or asphalt-based or –impregnated materials, paper products, or other mixed waste. Further information on the impacts of burning prohibited waste can be found in the guidance document [Health and Environmental Effects of Open Burning of Refuse and Other Solid Wastes](#)

Approval

The *Environmental Management And Protection (General) Regulations* Section 13 identifies the burning of substances as an industrial activity including railway ties and other wood treated with wood preservatives, waste materials from building or construction sites, trash, garbage or other waste from commercial, industrial or municipal operations and materials containing rubber or plastic. Section 14 requires that any person who engages in the above industrial activity to obtain a permit.

If recycling is not an option the burning of clean wood waste separated from building or construction sites or separated from industrial or municipal operations a permit is not required if the general open burning requirements below are being followed.

General Open Burning Requirements

Open burning of clean waste wood can occur provided it is done so in accordance with the following conditions:

- Prior to burning, the clean wood pile is inspected to ensure that it only contains appropriate materials, as defined above, and a written record is documented showing such an inspection was made.
- Only burn clean dry, well aerated wood. Wet or dirt covered material will smoulder and create offensive smoke.
- Do not burn during Air Quality Advisories and/or Burn Restrictions.
- Burn in open areas away from overhead wires and branches and at least 15m away from any structure.
- Scrape away burnable materials on the ground several feet around piles. The result should be bare soil.
- Burning shall be conducted during the day-time when meteorological conditions are favourable. See guidelines outlined down below.

- Burning shall immediately cease and the fire suppressed if a fire has caused or is causing an air contaminant or adverse effect as defined by *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010*.
- The fire shall be supervised and controlled at all times, never leave fires unattended. Before vacating the site, the fire should be completely extinguished to ensure smouldering of material does not occur. A buried fire is not considered extinguished. Soaking the material with water is the best method. Ashes should be cold prior to leaving the site.
- Fire suppression equipment shall be present at all times during any type of open-air burning.
- The party responsible for the fire shall abide by *The Wildfire Act, 2015*, where applicable and any local by-laws, codes or regulations.
- A burn notification number is required and can be obtained by contacting your local Wildfire Management Forest Protection Area Office during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Notify the Controlled Burn Line at least 24 hours prior to burn at **1-866-404-4911** to provide information about the planned burn along with the burn notification number.

Wooden Structure Open Burning Requirements

In addition to all General Open Burning Conditions stated above the open burning of large wooden structures must be done in accordance with the following conditions:

- Prior to the burn, the mayor, administrator or council should be informed of the intention to demolish the structure. If the administrator of a municipality is notified he/she should inform the representative(s) of the hamlet or village where the structure is located. The contractor responsible for the project must acquire all appropriate demolition permits.
- Prior to the burn, all materials not defined as clean wood waste must be removed from the structure prior to burning and recycled or disposed of at an approved waste disposal facility. Records that the inspection was performed should be kept. If you are unsure whether a material is permitted to be burnt, contact the Ministry of Environment prior to burning.
- A berm, pit or other form of containment should be in place to prevent the spread of fire.

Meteorological Conditions

Favourable meteorological conditions allow for smoke dispersion, air mixing, safe combustion and minimal smouldering. Planning shorter burn periods will help better manage burning in the event of changing weather conditions. The following meteorological conditions should be considered before and during open-air burning activities. If conditions are not favorable, the burn should be postponed or terminated.

Ventilation – persistent low-level atmospheric/temperature inversions can result in poor ventilation for the fire and trap smoke near the ground. Environment Canada has developed a venting index to predict air circulation which can be used to determine whether the atmospheric conditions are suitable for burning. Burning should only be done if the afternoon venting index is forecast to be good on the day of the burn. If the venting index is forecast to be good in the afternoon but poor in the morning then wait until late morning before starting the burn.

Rain, fog or snow – while burning with snow on the ground or after a rain event may be safer from a fire safety perspective, it has to be balanced with the concern that materials may be damp and burn inefficiently and could smoulder excessively, creating a potential for nuisance smoke.

Wind speed – Winds increase atmospheric mixing, thus contributing to better dispersion of the smoke from pile burns and lower risk of compromised air quality. However high wind speeds also increase the risk of fires spreading or burning out of control.

Wind Direction – the prevailing wind during the burn should be away from any receptors (ie: residences, schools, hospitals, etc.) likely to be affected by the smoke.

Drought or dry weather conditions – increase the risk of a burn escaping containment and becoming a wildfire.

Temperature and relative humidity – these can rapidly affect the drying rates on vegetative fuels.

This guidance document contains excerpts from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Guidance Document for Canadian jurisdictions on Open-Air Burning. For further information on wood burning and open-air burning, please consult the CCME website:

http://www.ccme.ca/en/resources/air/wood_burning.html

Failing to comply with the above conditions may result in a *Warning of Non-Compliance* being issued or other *Enforcement Actions*

Burning of non-clean wood waste can be reported to Turn In Poachers and Environmental Violators (TIP)

saskatchewan.ca/tip | 1-800-667-7561

Clean Wood Waste - refers to tree trunks, tree branches, brush, or wood products that do not contain painted or treated wood material.

Questions about Industrial Burning Activities: *The Environmental Management and Protection (General) Regulations.* Web:
<http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/freelaw/documents/English/Regulations/Regulations/E10-22R1.pdf>

Questions about Construction and Demolition Waste Recycling and Disposal: Construction and Demolition Waste Recycling and Disposal Factsheet. Web:
<http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/66/86791-Waste%20-%20Construction%20and%20Demolition%20Waste%20Management%20and%20Disposal.pdf%20>.

Contact and References

Saskatchewan
Ministry of Environment
Tel: 1-800-567-4224 (toll free in North America)
or 306-787-2584
Web: www.environment.gov.sk.ca
E-mail: Centre.Inquiry@gov.sk.ca

EPB #33
November 2017