

What is residential open burning?

- Residential open burning is the act of burning materials at a private family dwelling. The smoke is not passed through a smokestack or chimney from an enclosed chamber and emits air contaminants in the smoke directly into the air.



Why is residential open burning a concern?

- All open burning activities produce smoke, which contains harmful pollutants – some of which are toxic.
- Smoke from five pounds of leaves contains about one pound of air pollution.
- Open burning contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone and particulate pollution. Ozone and particles are harmful pollutants that damage human health, vegetation and buildings.
- Open burning can cause health problems including eye, nose and throat irritation; lung irritation and congestion; shortness of breath and coughing; stomach or intestinal upset; headaches or memory loss; skin irritations or burns; and eye damage.
- Repeated exposure to smoke can cause health problems for you and your family.
- Children, the elderly, pregnant or nursing women and people with lung problems may suffer more serious health effects than other adults.
- You may be breaking the law. Open burning is illegal in four Indiana counties and there may be local ordinances that are more strict than state law.

When is residential open burning legal?

- Indiana state law allows certain open burning activities with regulations that minimize the impact on air quality and public health.
- Residents should always contact their local air pollution control agencies, local fire department or health department to check for local laws, rules or ordinances on open burning that may be stricter than state law.
- Burning of clean wood products, including leaves and tree branches, is legal in most areas when done properly and in accordance with local laws.
- Burning household trash and outdoor waste, such as plastics and building materials, is illegal. The pollution that burning these products produces contaminates soil and water and poses a risk to health.
- Because asbestos and treated wood contain chemicals dangerous to human health, burning them is always illegal.

How can I residentially open burn legally?

- Comply with all other federal, state and local laws, rules and ordinances.
- Residential open burning does not include businesses. It is always illegal to open burn at a business.
- Burn only clean wood products. Wood products coated with stain, paint, glue or other coatings may not be burned.
- Burn only during safe weather conditions. Do not open burn during high winds or on Ozone Action Days.
- Attend fires until completely extinguished.
- Burn only during daylight hours and extinguish fires prior to sunset. At night, there is poor dispersion when the winds go down and inversions get set up. Also, it's more difficult to avoid and fight fires in the dark.
- Keep fire-fighting equipment adequate for the size of the fire nearby.
- Burn materials in a noncombustible and ventilated container, such as a metal drum with enclosed sides and bottom. Burning on the ground is illegal.
- Residential open burning is not allowed at mobile home parks, apartments, condominiums or buildings of more than four dwelling units.
- Extinguish fires if they create a hazard, nuisance, pollution problem or threat to public health.

Where can I get more information?

- For more information, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Air Quality at (800) 451-6027 ext. 3-0178 or visit www.in.gov/idem/air to view or download a copy of IDEM's [Open Burning Brochure](#).