



Who should you contact if you suspect illegal burning?

Your local government is authorized to enforce the general prohibition against open burning. Local law enforcement officials have the authority to enforce the prohibitions against the open burning of wastes and often are the best option for a timely response.

If you suspect illegal burning, you should first contact your local law enforcement agency. You may contact the local field office of the Illinois EPA. To locate your nearest Illinois EPA Field Office visit: www.epa.state.il.us

For more information:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov

Great Lakes Trash and Open Burning
www.openburning.org

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.state.il.us/burn-barrels

Questions about disposal issues
217/785-8604

Questions about open burning
217/782-2113

Illinois Dept. of Public Health
www.idph.state.il.us

Division of Environmental Health
217/782-5830

Your local fire marshal or fire department can also answer questions about risks from open burning.

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Burn Barrels – Your Questions Answered



Backyard Burn Barrels— Are They Safe?

Why should I be concerned about the open burning of household waste?

The nature of household trash has changed over the past fifty years. Today, bleached paper, plastic packaging or plastic products and printed materials with toxic chemicals make up a large portion of society's waste. These items contain chemical dyes, coatings, pigments and chlorine that can form even more toxic chemicals when burned. In fact, chlorine is present in most household waste, even paper products.

What pollutants are emitted from open burning?

An estimated 5,000 tons of pollutants are emitted annually from open burning of household waste. Particulates, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide represent the largest portion of these pollutants. Because burn barrels receive little oxygen, they create low temperature fires that generate other toxic pollutants such as benzene, styrene oxide, formaldehyde, dioxins and furans. Dioxins are produced in burn barrels at levels more than two times greater (per pound of refuse) than from municipal incinerators. Some metals such as lead, cadmium and chromium are also released.

Can these chemical emissions harm my family's health?

Yes. These pollutants are released into the air where they can be inhaled by those closest to or downwind from the source. They also deposit on leafy plants that are eaten by livestock. Dioxin accumulates in animal fat and is passed through meat and dairy products to humans. Depending on how long and how often one is exposed, certain pollutants can harm the lungs, kidneys, the nervous system and the

liver. Short-term exposure can aggravate asthma and affect other respiratory conditions. Long-term exposure can lead to an increased risk of cancer, heart disease, and respiratory, reproductive and developmental problems.

What cannot be burned in a burn barrel?

Garbage (refuse resulting from the handling, processing, preparation, cooking and consumption of food or food products), trade waste (construction debris and roofing materials), used furniture, appliances and automobile parts are not considered domicile waste and **may not be burned**. If you live outside of a restricted area (see below), you may burn domicile waste generated from a single home on-site. Do not overload the burn barrel so more oxygen can reach the fire to burn safely.

Where is burn barrel use prohibited?

No waste, except landscape waste, may be burned in a restricted area. All cities, villages and incorporated towns in Illinois are restricted areas. In addition, restricted areas include an area extending one mile beyond the boundaries of any municipality having a population of 1,000 or more persons according to the latest federal census.

Landscape waste is allowed to be burned on the premises where it is generated as long as a local ordinance does not limit the burning of it.

- **Note: State Law is applicable unless there is a more restrictive local prohibition or limitation on open burning.**

"Uncontrolled combustion such as burning of household waste is expected to become the largest quantified source of dioxin emissions to the environment."

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
"Dioxin: Scientific Highlights from Draft
Reassessment (2000)."

www.epa.gov/ncea/dioxin.htm (25 May 2001).

Why should I stop burning?

- Burn barrels are the most significant remaining source of dioxin in the U.S. and produce a variety of other toxins.
- Your individual choices impact the quality of everyone's food supply.
- Your health and the health of your family and neighbors may depend on it.
- There is a risk of forest fires in some areas from uncontrolled open burning.
- You may be breaking the law.

What alternatives do I have to burning?

Contact a local garbage hauler about disposal options. Even rural areas have a lot more options than they used to.

REDUCE extra packaging by buying in bulk. Avoid buying disposable items; buy durable, repairable items.

REUSE by donating unwanted clothing, furniture, toys and electronics to friends or charities. Give old magazines and books to hospitals or nursing homes. Repair rather than discard or replace.



RECYCLE junk mail, magazines, newspapers, office paper, cardboard, aluminum, tin, metal and acceptable plastics. Return plastic bags to stores that recycle them. Contact your local solid waste agency or recycling coordinator for more information or to see about increasing recycling opportunities in your area.

COMPOST food, lawn and garden waste some paper and cardboard packaging.