
What is “Backyard Burning”?

“Backyard burning” is the use of outdoor fires for disposing of natural vegetation from a single- or two-family home. The vegetation must originate from and be burned on the property of the home. Regulation IV, Rule 438 “Open Outdoor Fires” of the Air Pollution Control District regulates air emissions from all outdoor fires in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties.

What are Alternatives to Burning?

Because burning can release a substantial amount of air pollution, the Air Pollution Control District encourages everyone to use alternative methods to dispose of natural vegetation when feasible. These include composting, chipping or taking yard waste to landfills where the material is diverted to make mulch or transported to facilities that burn waste to generate electricity. Some landfills in this area accept yard waste at a much lower disposal fee than regular garbage.

Who May Conduct Backyard Burning?

If you live in a single- or two-family home in Monterey, San Benito or Santa Cruz counties, and if your local fire jurisdiction allows it, you may be able to conduct backyard burning under certain conditions. You must have a valid permit to conduct backyard burning, if required, from your local fire agency. Backyard burning is not legal for apartment complexes or businesses.

What Can I Burn?

If you have followed the guidelines contained in this pamphlet completely, you may be allowed to burn on your property any natural vegetation grown on your property that is properly dried. (See “How Must I Burn” for more information.)

What is a Burn Day?

Burn days are designated by the California Air Resources Board (ARB). Each day the ARB examines weather patterns to predict whether the smoke from fires will dissipate safely. If the answer is yes, the ARB declares that day a burn day.

Whom do I Contact to be Able to Burn?

Contact your local fire department regarding local fire permits required for backyard burning, to determine the size and number of burn piles that can be burned on your property safely each ARB-declared burn day, and to find out what other restrictions may be imposed by your local fire agency.

When May I Burn?

- The hours during which you may burn depend on the permit issued by your local fire agency.
- Backyard burning is allowed only on ARB-declared burn days between December 1 and April 30.
- Call 1-800-CAL-BURN to learn if it's a burn day. The declarations for the next day are usually posted by 4 P.M. the previous day.

How Must I Burn?

These guidelines will help you to burn while reducing the smoke's impact on your neighbors.

- ▶ Avoid creating a public nuisance and being cited and fined by extinguishing your fire immediately if the smoke from your fire begins to affect your neighbors or nearby roads.
- ▶ The vegetation must be free from waste such as garbage, plastic, treated or painted wood, tires, tar paper, demolition debris, etc. Try to avoid burning poison oak.
- ▶ To avoid smoldering fires, the material to be burned must be reasonably free of dirt and soil and visible surface moisture. Stack the material loosely to allow air to circulate freely.
- ▶ After rain, if the material to be burned is wet, allow the pile to dry before burning. Covering dried materials can prevent this delay.
- ▶ Avoid burning leaves and other small material which can become tightly compacted, retain moisture, and smolder when burning. This type of material can easily be disposed of in your weekly garbage pick-up. Check with your disposal service about yard waste pick-up.
- ▶ When possible, ignite the pile on the downwind side. This allows the material to burn more thoroughly and gives better control of the fire.
- ▶ Tree stumps six inches or larger in diameter must dry at least 180 days before burning.
- ▶ Trees and branches two inches or greater in diameter, but less than six inches must be dried for at least 60 days before burning.
- ▶ Trees and branches less than two inches in diameter and plant trimmings must be dried for at least 30 days before burning.

What About Other Kinds of Burning?

This Air Pollution Control District has separate requirements and guidelines designed to accommodate farmers, ranchers, developers, and others who need to burn vegetation. These types of burns include agricultural waste burns, development burns, forest management burns, prescribed burns, range improvement burns, wildland vegetation management burns, and residential waste burns. Please contact the District's Compliance Division at 647-9411 for information on these other types of burning.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District
Compliance Division
24580 Silver Cloud Court
Monterey, CA 93940
(831) 647-9411 (phone)
(831) 647-8501 (FAX)
<http://www.mbuapcd.org> (District Web site)

Daily Burn Day Status Hotline . (800) CAL-BURN
..... or (800) 225-2876

ARB Forecast Line (916) 322-6014

Guidelines for the Backyard Burning of Vegetation

*in Monterey, San Benito, and
Santa Cruz Counties*



**Monterey Bay Unified Air
Pollution Control District**
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