

FIRE-SAFE IN TENNESSEE



State Fire Marshal's Office Urges Caution With Outdoor Burning

As the weather slowly warms, many Tennesseans are sprucing up their outdoor property. Because these maintenance efforts often include the burning of limbs, lumber and other debris, the State Fire Marshal's Office wants the public to be aware of outdoor-burning safety precautions.

"Negligent outdoor burning can lead to death, injury, property loss and environmental damage," says State Fire Marshal and Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak. "Care must be taken to ensure that burnings are conducted safely."

Take the following precautions to make sure your outdoor burning plans are conducted properly:

- Check with your local fire department or municipality for any restrictions before starting an open air, recreational, or outdoor cooking fire. Obtain proper permits, if required. You might not be permitted to do outdoor burning in some municipalities and during some seasons.
- In addition to notifying your local fire department, let neighbors know your plans to burn.
- Closely supervise all outdoor fires. Make sure the fire is out before leaving.
- Supervise children around any fire outdoors, including campfires, fire pits, chimineas, and outdoor fireplaces.
- Permitted open fires (such as bonfires or trash fires) need to be at least 50 feet from anything that can burn.
- Permitted recreational fires (such as campfires or fire pits) need to be at least 25 feet away from anything that can burn, including trees and overhanging branches. Never leave a campfire unattended. Extinguish your fire completely.
- Establish wide control lines down to bare mineral soil at least five feet wide around burn piles.
- Avoid burning on windy, dry days. When conditions are windy or dry, it is easy for open burning to spread out of control.
- Where outdoor burning is allowed, never use gasoline or other flammable or combustible liquids.
- When burning, have a hose, bucket of water or shovel and dirt or sand nearby to extinguish the fire.
- In the unfortunate event that a fire does get out of control, call 911 immediately and wait in a safe place for the arrival of the local fire department.

From October 15 through May 15, anyone starting an open-air fire within 500 feet of a forest, grassland or woodland must by law secure a burning permit from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry. Permits are not required for burning in containers such as a metal barrel with a half-inch mesh screen cover. The permits can be obtained by calling your local Division of Forestry office between the hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday. Permits are generally good for 24 hours and can be issued for weekend burning. Permits can also be obtained online for small-scale burning of leaf and brush piles measuring less than 8

feet by 8 feet in area. The online system was developed to more efficiently issue permits to landowners conducting small-scale debris burns, and to provide better access through the weekend and evening hours for landowners. These permits can be obtained on days and in counties where burn permits are allowed, by visiting <http://BurnSafeTn.org>. The website is also a good source of information for safe debris burning practices and fire prevention tips, including how to protect your home in the event of a wildfire.

Anyone needing to burn within an incorporated city should contact city authorities about any local burning ordinances. Many towns and cities have their own burning regulations that supersede the Division of Forestry's burning permit program. For more information on burning regulations, including how to obtain a burn permit, visit the Division of Forestry at <http://BurnSafeTn.org>.

For information on what materials may NOT be burned in Tennessee, please visit the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Open Burning Guidelines: www.tn.gov/environment/apc/pdf/OpenBurningBrochure.pdf.

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