

# GUIDE TO THE OPEN BURNING SMOKE CONTROL REGULATION



**What You Need To Know**  
**BEFORE** You Burn



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection  
Kootenay and Okanagan Region

# What You Need to Know Before You Burn

## **Why Regulate Open Burning and Smoke?**

In 1993 the Provincial Health Officer noted health impacts from airborne particulate matter are greater than those from any other air pollutant. Fine particles, which are the main constituents of smoke, remain suspended in the air and they may be inhaled and deposited deep in the lungs. Inhalation of fine particulate is linked to emergency room visits for asthma, hospitalizations, impaired lung function, increased absenteeism from work and school, and death from cardiopulmonary disease.

Children, the elderly, asthmatics, and others suffering from respiratory disorders are especially vulnerable to smoke-related air pollution. Open burning can affect air quality on a smaller scale - your neighbourhood, your community - and on a much larger scale, polluting entire valleys and beyond.

## **Open Burning Requirements**

After province-wide consultation, the BC government proclaimed the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation in 1993. It applies to fires for purposes such as land clearing, silviculture, forestry, wildlife habitat enhancement, and domestic range improvement. The intent of the regulation is to reduce smoke emissions and impacts without requiring an ***Air Emission Permit*** from the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP).

**An *Air Emission Permit* is not required for open burning of debris on a parcel of land, provided all of the following conditions are met:**

- √ ***no open burning restrictions are in effect (see *Ministry Burning Restrictions* section in this brochure);***
- √ ***favourable weather exists for smoke dispersion (see *Required Atmospheric Conditions* section in this brochure);***
- √ ***prohibited and/or noxious materials are not burned (see *Prohibited Materials* section in this brochure);***
- √ ***debris is burned on land from which it originated;***
- √ ***all other reasonable options (reduce, re-use, and recycle) have been pursued before burning;***
- √ ***open burning is conducted greater than 100 metres from neighbouring residences and businesses and greater than 500 metres from schools, hospitals, and continuing care facilities;***
- √ ***smoke emissions will not pose a visibility hazard to airports or highways;***
- √ ***the burn complies with any applicable municipal, regional district, or improvement district bylaw that is more restrictive than the regulation;***
- √ ***open burning is conducted in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of BC*;***
- √ ***for cities, towns, and villages:***
  - ***the smoke release period must not exceed 72 consecutive hours***
  - ***no open burning has occurred on the parcel of land at any time during the preceding 15 days***
  - ***smoke may be released during open burning on a parcel of land no more than 4 separate occasions during a calendar year***
- √ ***for areas other than cities, towns, and villages:***
  - ***the smoke release period must not exceed 96 consecutive hours***

## Before You Burn

Ensure you comply with the Open Burning Requirements.

Call the **Air Quality Information Line** at **1-877-922-3399** to ensure burning restrictions requiring a permit are not in effect.

Make sure the weather is good for smoke dispersion. To check ventilation conditions see *Contacts* section at the end of this brochure.

### Required Atmospheric Conditions

Where there's fire, there's smoke. We all have a responsibility to ensure that our towns and valleys do not become obscured by smoke. Playing your part in smoke management is crucial to maintaining clean air and a healthy environment.

Burning when atmospheric conditions are favourable to dispersion will prevent smoke impacts. Atmospheric stability, mixing height, and winds all affect how smoke is dispersed.

The **Ventilation Index** measures the ability of the atmosphere to disperse smoke emissions. The Open Burn Smoke Control Regulation requires the Index forecast to be *Good* (afternoon) for the day any open burn is started and *Good* or *Fair* (afternoon) for the second day of smoke release.

If the Ventilation Index is not available for your area, you must conduct an on-site test burn on the day of the proposed burn, lasting no longer than 60 minutes, to evaluate whether weather conditions are conducive to good dispersion.

Alternatively, if the Ventilation Index is not available for your area or you are at an elevation above the predicted mixing height, you can request a **Spot Forecast** from Environment Canada (see *Contacts* section at the end of this brochure).

Wood debris from land clearing must not be added to an existing open burn if:

- ⊕ weather conditions change and the ventilation index becomes *Poor* (afternoon) - i.e. you must reassess ventilation conditions before adding any additional material after the initial day of ignition;
- ⊕ local winds make smoke dispersion inadequate;
- ⊕ a temperature inversion forms trapping smoke near the surface;
- ⊕ any related restrictions have been imposed by WLAP or any other regulatory agency - i.e. burn ban;
- ⊕ open burning of debris must not be initiated or new material added if atmospheric mixing is insufficient to provide rapid dispersion of smoke emissions

or

- ⊕ **if the air flow will cause the smoke to negatively impact on a nearby population or cause pollution.**

Note that ventilation indices normally drop to *Poor* after sunset.

## **Exemptions to the Regulation**

The Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation **does not** \* apply to agricultural and residential ('backyard') burning of foliage, weed, crops, or stubble.

\* Check with local government for any bylaws related to burning in your area.

### **Kootenay and Okanagan Region Ventilation Zones**

#### **Zone 1**

Trail, Castlegar, Edgewood, Burton, New Denver, Slocan, Kaslo, Riondel, Balfour, Crawford Bay, Nelson, and Salmo

#### **Zone 2**

Nakusp, Golden, Galena Bay, Shelter Bay, Revelstoke, Donald, Mica Creek, Trout Lake, Field, Parsons, and Meadow Creek.

#### **Zone 3**

Spillimacheen, Edgewater, Brisco, Canal Flats, Invermere, Radium, Elkford, Skookumchuck, Sparwood, Kimberley, Cranbrook, Fernie, Elko, Moyie, Wyndell, Creston, and Yahk.

#### **Zone 4**

Blueberry-Paulson, Christina Lake, and Grand Forks.

## Prohibited Materials

- |                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ø asphalt          | Ø fuel or lubricant containers |
| Ø asphalt products | Ø paint                        |
| Ø biomedical waste | Ø tar paper                    |
| Ø demolition waste | Ø plastics                     |
| Ø domestic waste   | Ø railway ties                 |
| Ø drywall          | Ø rubber                       |
| Ø manure           | Ø special waste                |
|                    | Ø treated lumber               |
|                    | Ø tires                        |

### Ministry Burning Restrictions

WLAP's Regional Waste Manager has the authority to restrict open burning for specified areas and periods by requiring a Permit or Approval to open burn. To determine if WLAP burning restrictions are in effect, call the WLAP **Air Quality Information Line** at **1 877 922-3399**.

### Open Burning Without a Permit

If you meet the conditions identified in the Open Burning Requirements and Required Atmospheric Conditions sections in this brochure, you are free to burn **without** a WLAP Air Emission Permit.

If you do not meet the conditions identified here and wish to request a Permit, call the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection Kootenay and Okanagan regional office at 250 354-6355 or toll free through Enquiry BC at 1 800 663-7867.

# Contacts

## Alternatives to Burning:

- ⇒ BC Recycling Hotline 1 800 667-4321

## Weather, Air Quality, and Open Burning

### Information On The Web:

- ⇒ WLAP Air Quality -  
[wlapwww.gov.bc.ca](http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca)
- ⇒ Environment Canada -  
[www.weatheroffice.com](http://www.weatheroffice.com)

## Ministry of Forests or Municipal Burning

### Conditions or Restrictions:

- ⇒ Contact your District Forest Office, Municipality, or Fire Department
- ⇒ Ministry of Forests burn reference number -  
1 888 797-1717
- ⇒ Ministry of Forests -  
[www.gov.bc.ca/for](http://www.gov.bc.ca/for)

## *The Waste Management Act and the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation.*

- ⇒ Available for viewing at any WLAP office or at  
[www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg) on the Web. Many public libraries provide Internet access at no charge.
- ⇒ Copies available from

*Government Publication Services  
PO Box 9452 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9V7*

*Telephone: 250 387-6409 or toll free  
1 800 663-6105*