

Essex Fire Department Open Burning Guidelines

Open burning season is from January 15 through May 1. A burning permit must be obtained by the homeowners from the Essex Fire Department for a fee of \$20.00 or \$10.00 for Senior Citizens, which is made payable by check to the Town of Essex, and is issued at the Dispatch Center at the Essex Fire and Police station. Burning permits will not be issued to businesses, only to homeowners. Weather conditions can change rapidly, especially in the spring, and the Fire Department will determine on a daily basis when it is safe to conduct open burning. Permit holders shall call the Dispatch Center at 978-768-6511 each day after 9 AM to see if burning is being allowed, and if so, inform dispatch that they wish to activate their permit for the day. If winds kick up or other atmospheric conditions change suddenly, making it unsafe to burn, permits can be rescinded (cancelled).

The open burning must be a minimum of 75 feet from all buildings and must be conducted between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and must take place on the land closest to the source of material to be burned, according to Department of Environmental Protection regulations (310 CMR DEP 07). <http://www.mass.gov/dep/air/compliance/burning.htm>

People conducting illegal burning, or who allow a fire to get out of control, may be held liable for costs of extinguishing a fire, fined, and even imprisoned (MGL c.48 s.13).

With A Permit, Burning of the Following Materials is allowed:

- Brush, cane, driftwood, and forestry debris from other than commercial or industrial land clearing operations
- Materials normally associated with the pursuit of agriculture such as, fruit tree prunings, dead raspberry stalks, blueberry patches for pruning purposes, and infected beehives for disease control.
- Trees and brush resulting from agricultural land clearing.
- Fungus infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available.

Burning of the Following Materials is not allowed Statewide:

- Brush, trees, cane and driftwood from commercial and/or industrial land clearing operations.
- Grass, hay, leaves and stumps, and tires.
- Construction material and debris

How to Safely Ignite the Fire

- An adult should always be present during open burning and children and pets should be kept at a safe distance away.
- Use paper and kindling to start a fire and add progressively larger pieces of wood. Parts of a leftover Christmas tree may also be used.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene or any other flammable liquid to start a fire! The risk of personal injury in these cases is very high.
- Burn one small pile at a time and slowly add to it. This will help keep the fire from getting out of control.
- Select a location away from utility lines.

Fires Must be Attended Until Completely Extinguished

Do not leave your fire burning unattended. This is a reason to revoke your burning permit.

Fire Control Tools and Water Supply Must Be Present

The water supply can be a pressurized fire extinguisher, a pump can or garden hose, and be sure to test it out before igniting the fire to be sure it works properly. Also, if relying on a garden hose double-check that the water supply is turned on and that there are no cracks in the hose itself. You are required to have a water supply and fire control tools on hand.

Watch the Wind: Be Prepared to Extinguish All Open Burning

It is unsafe to burn during high winds. Use common sense and don't wait for the fire department to contact you that it has become unsafe to burn. Sudden wind change is the how most open burning gets out of control.

Don't Delay a Call for Help

If for some reason, the fire should get out of control, call the fire department immediately. Use the utmost caution to prevent injury to yourself or family members or any damage by fire to your home.

April is the Cruellest Month

April is usually the worst month for brush fires. When snow pack recedes, before new growth emerges, last year's dead grass, leave and wood are dangerous tinder. Winds also tend to be stronger and more unpredictable during April. Unfortunately many people wait until the warmer weather to conduct open burning.

Prevent Wildfires by Burning During Wet Snowy Conditions

Prevent permit fires from becoming wild land fires by burning early in the season. Wet and snowy winter conditions hinder the rapid spread of fire on or under the ground. Weather conditions and increased fire danger may lead to many days when burning cannot be allowed to take place.

Open Burning Alternatives

Open burning releases large amount of carbon dioxide, other gases and solid substances directly into the air, which can contribute to respiratory problems. Disposal of natural materials is best for the environment when they are used again in a different form. Try chipping or composting tree limbs, brush or forestry debris to use as landscaping materials. Check with your local public works or highway department; many have chippers at their municipal recycling center or transfer station, and will process debris for homeowners.