



# Lake County General Health District

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**LAKE COUNTY GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT**

## **CHECK THE LAW BEFORE BURNING OUTDOORS**

As the leaves begin to turn color and our thoughts turn to walks in the cool autumn air, football and all things apple or pumpkin-flavored, Lake County General Health District (LCGHD) is reminding residents that are planning to burn material outdoors to use the right safety measures and follow Ohio's outdoor burning laws. Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) each enforce different outdoor burning laws that restrict when, where and if a property owner can burn yard waste and other material, depending on whether you live in the city, suburbs or rural areas.

"People may believe that building a big pile of yard waste and lighting it up is the way to go, but it's not allowed by OEPA and ODNR regulations," commented Bert Mechenbier, Supervisor, Air Pollution Control of LCGHD. Because of possible brush and forest fires, ODNR does not allow burning in rural areas between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. in the drier months of March, April, May, October and November. This law applies to the ODNR Division of Forestry's fire protection area that includes the hilly wooded areas of eastern and southeastern Ohio.

OEPA and LCGHD enforce state and national air pollution control laws, including the laws for outdoor burning in restricted and unrestricted areas. Restricted areas are land within 1000 feet of a municipality and areas within a mile of communities with a population larger than 10,000. In restricted areas, landowners may burn outdoors for cooking purposes and some occupational needs. Landowners who live outside of restricted areas may burn residential waste outdoors if specific rules are followed, including that the outdoor burning be at least 1000 feet from all residential buildings on neighboring properties. OEPA regulations do not allow the burning of rubber, grease, asphalt or petroleum materials without permission from OEPA at any time during the year.

### **What does Ohio EPA Consider open burning?**

Open Burning is any fire set outdoors that does not vent to a chimney or stack. Studies suggest that even small camp fires burning clean wood can release harmful chemicals. Burning "unclean" materials can be even more hazardous.

### **Why is open burning a problem?**

Open burning can release many kinds of toxic fumes. Leaves and plant materials send millions of spores into the air when they catch fire, causing many people with allergies to have difficulty breathing. The pollutants released by open burning also make it harder to meet health-based air quality standards, especially in or near large cities. The gases released by open burning can also corrode metal siding and damage paint on buildings.

### **Health Concerns**

Burning household waste produces many toxic chemicals and is one of the largest known sources of dioxin in the nation. Other air pollutants from open burning include particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, lead and mercury. These pollutants have been linked to several health problems, including asthma, respiratory illnesses, nervous system damage, kidney and liver damage and reproductive or developmental disorders.

ODNR offers the following safety tips for those planning to burn outdoors where allowed:

- Clear the burning site of all materials that can catch fire;
- Use a proper burning container or a barrel with a lid;
- Clear a 10 foot area around the burning area;
- Have water and hand tools ready in case fire escapes;
- Avoid burning on windy days;
- Do not burn within 200 feet of any woodland, brushland, or field containing dry grass;
- Stay with the fire until it is out; and
- Take all responsible precautions.

For specific information on burning laws, contact OEPA's Division of Air Pollution Control at (614) 644-2270, ODNR's Division of Forestry at (614) 265-6694, or the LCGHD at (440) 350-2543. Individuals who want to open burn should contact their community officials for information on local rules.

A copy of OEPA's "Before You Light It: Know Ohio's Open Burning Regulations" is available on their web page at <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/portals/47/facts/openburn.pdf> . A copy of OEPA's Open Burning Rules is available at <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dapc/general/openburning.aspx> .