

WILDFIRE HAZARDS

The State of Alaska Division of Forestry is responsible for protecting state, municipal, and private land from wildfire threats. Each season over 50% of the service calls the Division of Forestry and cooperating fire departments respond to are to the *illegal burning of household garbage*.

Fires created by illegally burning garbage can generate toxic smoke which affects the health and safety of your neighbors and firefighters.

Hydrocarbons can burn hotter than a fire of wood products, creating a higher risk of wildfires. Additional concerns are the showering of embers and burning materials into the surrounding grass, brush, and trees, which can cause wildland fires. Some burning materials cannot be put out safely by firefighters and require specialized personnel and equipment resulting in additional costs to the public and a commitment of limited resources.



Help Prevent Alaska Wildfires - Take Time to Learn Before You Burn

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Be familiar with Federal, State, and local wildfire protection laws to LEARN how to burn safely.



Share with family, friends, and neighbors the health hazards and dangers associated with burning household garbage.



Help reduce the amount of household garbage by reusing, composting, and recycling items.



Use a waste collection service, transfer station, local landfill, or recycling center to dispose of unwanted garbage.



Call 911 or the nearest fire or police department to report illegal burning, especially if it appears it could escape its containment device, or if the weather is hot, dry and/or windy.

The Alaska Wildland Fire Protection Statutes and Regulations can be found at: <http://forestry.alaska.gov>

UNDERSTANDING THE DANGERS OF BURNING HOUSEHOLD GARBAGE



What you need to know to protect the health of your family, yourself, and the Alaska community



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ENFORCEMENT OVERVIEW

Residents throughout Alaska are continuing to illegally burn garbage in their burn barrels and burn piles without understanding the associated health risks. Across the nation it has become such a health concern that several government agencies prohibit burning garbage and will issue violators fines and/or court prosecution.



Alaskan residents and companies found illegally burning garbage on state, municipal, and/or private land can receive a fine and/or face criminal charges under Alaska Wildland Fire Protection Statutes and Regulations. Those violators may also receive a fine and/or criminal charges under the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Air Quality Laws and Regulations.



HEALTH HAZARDS

Alaska State and local agencies allow the burning of paper, cardboard, and untreated wood under certain conditions.

Burning the following can result in serious health concerns:

- plastics
- electronics
- treated lumber
- clothes
- tires
- paint chemicals
- automobile fluids
- seat cushions
- mattresses
- aerosol cans
- cleaning products
- Styrofoam
- other man-made materials

Young children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing medical conditions are especially vulnerable to these pollutants.



Burning of the above listed materials can change their composition, releasing hazardous chemicals in the smoke and creating drifting embers.

Studies show these hazardous chemicals can contribute to short- and long-term health effects within human, domesticated and wild animals and our environment.

These hazardous pollutants are created when burning garbage:

- **Dioxins** can cause reproductive damage, suppress immune system, disrupt hormones and cause cancer.
- **Particle pollution** aggravates respiratory systems and affects children and adults with asthma, bronchitis, COPD, and other airway conditions and lung diseases.
- **Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)** can be carcinogenic and cause cancer.
- **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** can lead to eye, throat and nose irritation, headaches, loss of coordination, and damage to internal organs and the central nervous system.
- **Carbon Monoxide** can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, confusion, blurred vision, and loss of consciousness.
- **Hexachlorbenzene** can accumulate in the environment and damage fetal development, liver and kidneys, and contribute to fatigue, and skin irritation.
- **Ash** contains toxic metals - including mercury, lead, chromium and arsenic - which when inhaled or ingested can lead to internal organ failure and brain damage.