

# Burning Laws and Permits

## North Carolina Open Burning Rules

Both state and local laws regulate open burning. State laws allow only the burning of natural vegetation from your own property. State and local laws prescribe the time of day and the weather conditions under which you are allowed to burn. Before burning materials outside, you should check with your [County Forest Service Office](#) to see if a state permit is necessary and if burning is allowed under current weather conditions. Also check with your local government authority (town and county offices, or local fire departments or Fire Marshal's) to determine if a local permit is necessary.

### What can be burned?

Only leaves, branches, and other plant growth can be burned. If public pickup is available, the leaves and branches should not be burned. Allowable burning includes: Campfires, outdoor barbecues, fires for human warmth, and bonfires for festive occasions.

It is illegal to burn the following materials:

Garbage, paper, and cardboard, tires and other rubber products, building materials including lumber, wire, plastics, and synthetic materials, asphalt shingles and heavy oils, paints, household and agricultural chemicals.

Homeowners can burn yard trimmings (excluding logs and stumps more than 6 inches in diameter), if it is allowed by local ordinances, no public pickup of the yard trimmings is available, and it does not cause a public nuisance.

Landowners can burn vegetation to clear land or rights-of-way, provided:

- Prevailing winds are away from built-up areas and roads,
- Burning occurs between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and
- Fires are at least 500 feet away from occupied buildings.

Other occasions where open burning is allowed, with approval by the State Division of Air Quality, include fires for training firefighters, managing forestlands or wildlife habitats, controlling agricultural diseases and pests, and disposing of materials generated by hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters.

### [NC Open Burning Laws](#)

#### Is a Permit Needed?

State open burning permits are not needed in the following situations:

- Burning greater than 500 feet from any woodland
- Burning closer than 100 feet to an occupied dwelling
- Burning inside a municipal city limits

The local governments in several towns, cities, and counties have specific rules and restrictions on open burning and require permits. To determine if your local government requires a permit, check with the local fire department, Fire Marshal or contact the County Forest Service Office.

State permits are issued free of charge through the Division of Forest Resources (the North Carolina Forest Service), Duplin County Fire Marshals or designated agents. An open burning permit can be canceled, any time a burning ban is instituted.

The three types of open burning permits are:

1. The Open Burning Permit Non-High Hazard Counties, includes all of North Carolina except 18 coastal counties.
2. The Open Burning Permit High-Hazard Counties includes the 18 coastal counties considered a hazard for severe forest fires and intolerable smoke conditions. The High-Hazard Counties are Beaufort, Bladen, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Duplin, Gates, Hyde, Jones, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington.
3. The Special Open Burning Permit Ground Clearing High-Hazard Counties is for ground clearing of areas of more than five contiguous acres, in the 18 coastal counties that are considered a high-hazard. Only the County Ranger issues this permit.

Each North Carolina County has a County Ranger and staff to administer and enforce these permits. A County Ranger has an appointed network of "agents" such as storeowners, volunteer fire departments, Fire Marshal's and other convenient public locations to issue open burning permits. Permits do not excuse a person from following the state's open burning rules.