

Questions on outdoor burning

These questions are prepared for your information. It is that time of year when we will soon be in fall with all the leaves on the ground and people doing a lot of outdoor burning. It will typically also turn to a much dryer time of year, making wildfires and forest fires a real possibility unless we use common sense and caution.

Q. I heard on the news a few weeks ago about a burn ban in effect from May 1 through September 30 this year. Is that for Union County?

A. The May 1st through September 30th burn ban DOES NOT include Union County. There are 54 counties that are under the burn ban but they are larger population counties including the metro Atlanta counties.

Q. What are the rules for burning in Georgia?

A. If you do not live in one of these counties under the burn ban, certain types of open burning are legal. Georgia's open burning rule specifies what you **can** burn. Remember that any type of open burning, also known as outdoor burning, including leaves, in the state of Georgia requires a burn permit, with the exception of certain acceptable agricultural burning.

Q. How do I obtain a burn permit?

A. To obtain a permit, simply call 1-877-OK2BURN (1-877-652-2876) or obtain one online at: <http://gatrees.org/OnlinePermits>. The online burn permit website is provided by the Georgia Forestry Commission, which provides the permits, and will also alert you of any additional local burn restrictions.

Remember that burn permits are good only for the day they are issued. If you obtain your permit after dark, the permit is good for the following day.

Q. What are some types of open burning that are legal in the state of Georgia?

A. Please note that the burning of garbage or lumber, even in a burn barrel, is illegal. Some of the legal types of burning are:

Reduction of leaves on premises of origin, agricultural procedures for production of harvesting of crops, prescribed burning, recreational purposes and cooking, fire-fighting training, acquired structure burns, vegetative debris from storms, weed abatement, disease and pest prevention, open-flame devices, land clearing, construction, and right-of-way maintenance. For more information on these types of burning go to www.georgiaair.org.

Q. What are good practices to follow when doing outdoor burning?

A. The Georgia Forestry Commissioner puts out a very good brochure regarding safe practices for debris burning which is available at GaTrees.org. Some of the safe practices to follow are:

- Get a burn permit before you start.
- Have a rake, water hose and shovel available.
- Wear proper clothing including long pants, long sleeves, sturdy boots, gloves and safety glasses.
- Clear 25 foot or more area around debris pile.
- Never use flammable liquids to start fire.

- Start fire downwind of your pile.
- Never leave fire unattended.
- Ensure fire is completely extinguished and pile is cool to the touch.

Q. How can I minimize smoke as I know one of my neighbors will complain?

A. Remember that it is your responsibility to minimize smoke by:

- Burn small piles which produces less smoke.
- Burn dry piles. Wet piles produce more smoke.
- Burn on clear days. Smoke stagnates on cloudy, overcast days.
- Burn with a little wind. This helps disperse smoke.
- Avoid dirt in your piles. Dirt holds moisture which produces smoke.
- Avoid early-morning and night burning. Smoke lingers during these times.
- Be a good neighbor. Inform you neighbors of burn plans and if smoke becomes a problem, put your fire out.
- Remember, if your neighbor leaves their windows open in the fall, think of how you would feel if someone burned and filled your house up with the smell of smoke. Do unto others as you would have them do unto to you.

Be safe and enjoy the change of seasons which will be here before you know it. Thanks in advance for your caution.