

Residential Burn Barrels: A Source of Toxic Pollution

How does burning household waste produce toxic air pollution?

Burn barrels are inefficient and polluting; they produce low temperature fires that receive very little oxygen. They also produce a lot of smoke (finely divided particulate matter) and many toxic substances. Virtually all of the pollutants are released into the air close to ground level, where they are easily inhaled.



Burning in burn barrels is considered "open burning"

The majority of pollutants emitted from burning household wastes in a burn barrel (or other types of open burning) are carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, very small breathable particles and nitrogen oxides. However, smaller amounts of more poisonous chemicals are also released into the air when household waste is burned. These include benzene, styrene, formaldehyde, dioxins and furans. These toxic chemicals are carried deep into the lungs, attached to fine particles. There, they embed into lung tissue and enter the bloodstream.

Many cities have banned burn barrels, or open burning altogether, including Brookings, Bandon, Florence, Medford, Jacksonville, Talent, and Salem/Keizer.

Residential waste-disposal options

- **Recycling** - Readily available in most areas, recycling can reduce disposal costs by lowering the quantity of trash. Local recycling centers accept tin

cans, aluminum, newspaper, cardboard, office paper, glass, plastic containers and used oil.

- **Garbage pickup service** – Check with your local municipality.
- **Self-haul** – For do-it-yourself types, it is cheaper to haul trash to a permitted landfill or transfer site.

What materials can be burned?

Untreated wood, paper and natural vegetative materials can be safely burned.

Burning the following materials is illegal anytime, anywhere in Oregon:

- Asbestos
- Asphalt
- Auto parts (including frames)
- Dead animals
- Plastic and rubber products
- Tires
- Waste oil, petroleum materials
- Wet garbage and food waste
- Material creating dense smoke or noxious odors.

Burning prohibited materials can result in serious fines. For more information on Oregon's open burning rules and recycling options, contact DEQ.

Complaints

Please call your local fire department to report an open burning complaint. You may also contact DEQ's complaint hotline at 888-997-7888 or submit a complaint online at

<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/Get-Involved/Pages/File-Pollution-Complaint.aspx>

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Portland

700 NE Multnomah St.
Suite 600
Portland, OR 97232
Phone: 503-229-5696
800-452-4011
Fax: 503-229-6762

Bend

475 NE Bellevue Drive
Suite 110
Bend, OR 97701
541-388-6146

Pendleton

800 SE Emigrant Ave
Suite 330
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-4063

The Dalles

400 E Scenic Drive
Suite 307
The Dalles, OR 97058
541-298-7255

Salem

4026 Fairview Industrial
Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302
503-378-8240

Medford

221 Stewart Avenue
Suite 201
Medford, OR 97501
541-776-6010

www.oregon.gov/DEQ

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