Outdoor Burning Permit Information

Island, Skagit and Whatcom Counties

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northwest Clean Air agency

Serving Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties

Help keep our air clean

The Northwest Clean Air Agency works to preserve, protect, and enhance air quality in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. We enjoy excellent air quality, but we need your help to maintain it.

Learn the rules and consider alternatives to burning such as composting and chipping. Visit our website, **www.nwcleanair.org**, for information about alternatives to burning in your area.

Outdoor burning rules

Applies to all types of burning

[State outdoor burning rule — WAC 173-425]

Allowed

- **Burning natural vegetation or firewood only** – Not even paper is allowed, except for the amount necessary to start a fire.
- **Burning only when winds are less than 7 mph.**

Prohibited:

- **Burning during a burn ban** with some exceptions.
- **Using burn barrels** – They're prohibited statewide.
- **Burning construction, renovation, or demolition debris.**
- **Creating a nuisance** – Smoke, odor, or ash that unreasonably interferes with the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties.
- **Burning material not generated on site** (except firewood for recreational fires).
- **Burning at a permanent commercial business.**
- **Burning during air stagnation periods.**
- **Burning when winds exceed 7 mph.**

▸ See page 8 for burn ban information.

Burning garbage has been illegal since 1976.

When you need a permit

Permits are required for:

Recreational fires — Fires larger than 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet high require a written permit in Island and Whatcom counties. No written permit is required for fires smaller than 4 feet in diameter in Skagit County. Recreational fires consist only of charcoal or firewood and are used for cooking or pleasure.

▸ See page 4 for more information.

Residential fires — Fires larger than 4 feet in diameter require a permit in all three counties. Verbal permits are required for fires smaller than 4 feet in diameter in Island and Whatcom counties. Residential fires consist of yard and garden debris that is generated on site.

▸ See page 5 for more information.

Land-clearing fires — All land-clearing fires require a permit and must only contain natural vegetation generated from on-site land-clearing projects.

▸ See page 6-7 for more information.

Silvicultural fires — Permit conditions vary by site and time of year and are determined at the time the permit is written. Silvicultural fires are forestry burns in which the land is to remain forest and is not being cleared for other uses. These burns typically contain logging slash following a logging operation.

▸ See page 11 for silvicultural burn permit information.

If your fire department is called to your illegal fire, you may be billed for the response.

Recreational burning

Permit conditions

Recreational fires do not need a permit if all the conditions below are met. Check for additional restrictions in your area.

- The fire must consist only of charcoal or firewood and must only be used for cooking or pleasure.
- The fire is 3 feet in diameter or smaller and is in an enclosure no larger than 3 feet across. The enclosure must be a minimum of 16 inches high and made of cement block, stones, or 10-gauge steel.
- Materials being burned must be kept lower than the sidewalls of the enclosure.
- A charged garden hose or two five-gallon buckets of water must be on site.
- A shovel or rake must be on site.
- The fire must be 25 feet from any structure or standing timber.
- Tree branches must be cleared to the height of 15 feet above the enclosure.
- One person age 16 or older, who is capable of putting the fire out, must be in attendance at all times.
- The fire must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground).
- The landowner must give permission if the fire is not on your property.
- The fire must not create a nuisance. (See page 2.)

▸ **Permit contact information is on page 11.**

The No. 1 cause of forest fires in Washington is unattended debris fires.

Residential burning

Permit conditions

Written permits are required for fires over 4 feet in diameter. Verbal permits are required for fires under 4 feet in diameter. The following conditions must be met:

- Burning is allowed during daylight hours only.
- The fires must not exceed 10 feet in diameter. For piles more than 10 feet across and 10 feet high, a land-clearing permit is required.
- A shovel or rake must be on site.
- Water must be on site.
    - **For fires less than 4 feet in diameter**, you must have a charged garden hose that can reach the fire or 10 gallons of water and a bucket.
    - **For fires 4–10 feet in diameter**, you must have a charged garden hose that can reach the fire or a 55-gallon water source with a pump and enough hose to reach the fire.
- One person age 16 or older, who is capable of putting the fire out, must be in attendance at all times and have a method to call 911 if needed.
- Only one pile may be burned at a time unless otherwise permitted.
- It must not be an air stagnation period.
- All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground). The firebreak must be equal the size of the pile.
- The fire must be 50 feet from any structure, standing timber, or power lines.
- The landowner must give permission if the fire is not on your property.
- The fire must not create a nuisance. (See page 2.)

▸ **Permit contact information is on page 11.**

Land-clearing burning

Permit conditions

- Pile size maximum is 25 feet x 25 feet.
- A fan must be used to start the fire and assist in burning.
- A shovel and rake must be on site.
- A 350-gallon water source with a pump and enough 1½-inch hose to reach the entire fire must be on site.
- One person age 16 or older, who is capable of putting the fire out, must be in attendance at all times and must have a method to call 911 if needed.
- Burning is allowed 24 hours a day if permitted by local jurisdiction and attended at all times.
- The fire must not create a nuisance. (See page 2.)

Land-clearing burning (continued)

- The fire must be 50 feet away from any structure, standing timber, or power lines.
- All fires must be contained within a firebreak (bare ground). The firebreak must equal the size of the pile.
- Only one pile may be burned at a time unless permitted otherwise.
- It must not be an air-stagnation period (check the weather).
- The landowner must give permission if the fire is not on your property.
- An excavator with an operator is on site at all times during the burning.

▸ **Permit contact information is on page 11.**

Types of burn bans

Air quality burn ban – A temporary ban on burning called by the Northwest Clean Air Agency or the Washington Department of Ecology when air pollutants are measured at unhealthy levels.

Fire safety burn ban – A temporary ban on outdoor burning called by a fire official during periods of dry weather.

Permanent burn ban – A permanent ban on burning land-clearing debris, residential yard clippings, and other vegetative debris in specific areas.

Areas where outdoor burning is permanently banned

Washington state law is phasing out outdoor burning to protect public health. Residential yard debris and land-clearing burning is banned in all urban growth areas (UGAs)* and the following cities and towns:

Island County:	Coupeville, Freeland, Langley, and Oak Harbor
Skagit County:	Anacortes, Bayview, Burlington, Concrete, Hamilton, La Conner, Lyman, March Point, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley
Whatcom County:	Bellingham, Birch Bay, Blaine, Cherry Point, Columbia Valley (Paradise Valley, Peaceful Valley, Kendall), Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas.

To find out what alternatives to burning are available in your area, visit www.nwcleanair.org

* Call your local planning department for UGA boundaries.

Burn barrels are illegal.

Your health matters

Burning natural vegetation such as lawn clippings, leaves, and tree trimmings produces air pollutants.

Breathing these pollutants can harm your health.

Those at greatest risk are children, the elderly, and those suffering from chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis.

The Washington state Legislature regulates burning to protect public health and is phasing out certain types of burning in many areas of the state.

Wood smoke is a complex mixture of fine particles, many of which are toxic and known to cause cancer. Please consider alternatives to burning such as composting and chipping.

Please burn responsibly.

Could your home survive a wildfire?

Many homes are destroyed by wildfires every year. Often, these homes could have survived had the owners taken preventive action. Don't let your home become fuel for a wildfire. Follow these fire prevention tips and become FireWise.

The FireWise home

- Maintain a safety zone around the house. Remove flammable plants from around your home and replace with fire resistant plants.
- Build roofs and exteriors with fire-resistant materials. Put screens over the chimney and stovepipe and clean regularly.
- Remove overhanging tree limbs, moss and needles from the roof and gutters.
- Stack firewood away from the house.
- Keep storage areas clean and tidy. Never allow rags or newspapers to accumulate. Store flammable liquids in approved containers.

For more information on home fire safety visit the FireWise website at **www.firewise.org** or contact one of the following:

Skagit Conservation District 360-428-4313
Whatcom Conservation District ..... 360-354-2035 ext. 116
Whidbey Island Conservation District 360-678-4708
Washington State Department of Natural Resources .. 360-902-1000

The FireWise program is sponsored by the Natural Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program and administered locally by the Conservation Districts and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF Natural Resources

Northwest Conservation Districts

Burn ban information:

Island and Skagit counties ..... 360-428-1617 ext. 4
Whatcom County 360-778-5903

Permit information:

Recreational, residential, and land-clearing

Island County 360-679-7350
Skagit County..... 360-419-7789
Whatcom County 360-778-5903

Verbal permit information

Island County.....360-240-5526
Whatcom County 360-778-5903

Silvicultural burn permit information

Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties:
To obtain a written permit contact the Washington State Department of Natural Resources at 360-856-3500

For silviculture burning restrictions go to:
Phone.....800-323-BURN
Website .....https://fortress.wa.gov/dnr/firedanger

Civil penalties may be assessed by the fire authority in your county and/or the Northwest Clean Air Agency for violations of outdoor burning laws. Civil penalties range from $50 to $19,000.

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Serving Island, Skagit & Whatcom Counties

- Asbestos
- Business Assistance
- Climate Change
- Complaint Response
- Enforcement
- Indoor Air
- Outdoor Burning
- Permitting
- Public Information
- Woodstoves

For more information about these or other services, please visit us online at **www.nwcleanair.org.**

Northwest Clean Air Agency
1600 South Second Street
Mount Vernon, WA 98273-5202
Phone 360-428-1617