



Date: February 29, 2024

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Missoula County Fire Protection Association

Outdoor Burning Opens March 1 in Missoula County

Missoula, Montana – Spring is coming, Missoula County--and that means the opening of outdoor burning season!

The General, Essential Agriculture, and Prescribed Wildland Outdoor Burning Seasons open on March 1st in Missoula County. If you are planning to burn, please remember that all outdoor burning requires a burn permit, and the only material that may be disposed of by burning is untreated wood and vegetation generated onsite. Permits cost \$7.00 annually and can be purchased or renewed online at <https://app.egovmt.com/burnpermit/> or in person at most local fire protection agencies. Within Missoula City limits, parcels must be at least one acre or more in size to be eligible for an outdoor burn permit and recreational fires are banned year-round. Additionally, inside the [Missoula Air Stagnation Zone](#) (an area that stretches about four miles outside Missoula City limits), it is illegal to burn piles of leaves and grasses because of the smoke that it produces. If you are within the Air Stagnation Zone, dispose of leaves and grass by composting them or delivering them to a facility such as Garden City Compost. Dumping of any type of yard debris on public lands is prohibited.

Before lighting your fire, you must activate your permit either online (<https://app.egovmt.com/burnpermit/>) or by calling the automated activation phone line at 1-888-583-6497 after 9:00 A.M. on the day you wish to burn. Burning is allowed after 9:00 A.M. and the fire needs to be out by 4:00 P.M. Kerri Mueller, Air Quality Specialist with Missoula County explains why it's important to adhere to these burn windows.

“Outdoor burning is only allowed between the hours of 9am and 4pm because of how weather changes when the sun comes up or goes down. Ventilation rates, wind, and temperatures often plummet after sunset resulting in poor smoke dispersal conditions. If a fire smolders and smokes after 4pm, that smoke is likely to get trapped in the lower level of the atmosphere poorly impacting our air quality. Once morning comes, dispersion conditions improve and allow smoke to mix with the atmosphere more freely. Best practices are to build piles that will burn completely within the 9am to 4pm burn hours, which helps avoid smoke being produced overnight! Each day is new and has different weather conditions than the last. Generally, dispersion is best between the hours of 9am and 4pm, but some days just aren't good days to burn because the smoke isn't going to go anywhere. This typically looks like low mixing heights, low transport winds, and very little change in temperature throughout the day or a mixture of them all that contribute to poor smoke dispersal conditions. There may be new or different burn restrictions each day because of changing conditions. It's important to check the restrictions each morning when you go to activate your burn permit each day you plan to burn.”

If you are planning to burn this spring, please be aware of the conditions of not only your burn pile, but the vegetation in the surrounding area as well as predicted weather. After activating your permit, have an adequate supply of personnel, water, and equipment to control your burn, and do not leave it unattended until it is cold-to-the-touch.

To learn more about outdoor burning seasons, permits, and safe burning tips, visit missoulacounty.us/airquality or visit MCFPA.org and follow the Missoula County Fire Protection Association (MCFPA) Facebook page.

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