



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Division for Air Quality Urges Kentuckians to ‘Learn Before You Burn’

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 16, 2014) – Spring-cleaning season has arrived, and for many Kentuckians that means burning unwanted debris. But before you light that burn pile, the Kentucky Division for Air Quality (DAQ) reminds you to ‘learn before you burn.’ Many people may not realize that burning garbage is illegal in Kentucky and could result in fines of up to \$25,000 per day per violation.

“Garbage doesn’t just disappear when it is burned,” said DAQ Director Sean Alteri. “Burning garbage emits dangerous pollutants into the atmosphere that are harmful to public health.” Dioxins, hydrochloric acid, formaldehyde and heavy metals are just some of the toxic substances found in smoke from backyard burning of garbage, Alteri added.

Children, the elderly and those with existing health problems like asthma and heart disease are most at risk from open burning. Children are particularly sensitive to air pollution because their bodies are still developing. Children also breathe 50 percent more oxygen per pound of body weight than adults do, so their lungs are exposed to more harmful pollutants.

State law prohibits the burning of many materials including plastic, tires, cans, coated wire, carpeting and food waste. In addition, the burning of trailers, buildings, and construction and demolition debris such as shingles, drywall and insulation is prohibited. Painted, stained or treated wood products like fence posts, pallets, and furniture are illegal to burn, because they release dangerous toxins into the air. Items that cannot be recycled should be taken to a state-permitted landfill.

Open burning isn’t just unhealthy, it’s also dangerous. A small fire can quickly spread, especially during windy weather, resulting in widespread damage. This year in April alone, the

Kentucky Division of Forestry reported 385 separate wildfires burning a total of 11,521 acres. This is 100 fires more than last year's total for April.

Some open burning is legal with restrictions. Campfires, fires for cooking, and fires to dispose of tree limbs are permitted in most counties, except when a county-wide burn ban has been declared, or when prohibited by local ordinance.

Boone, Boyd, Bullitt, Campbell, Kenton, Lawrence and Oldham counties face additional open burning restrictions during ozone season, which runs from May 1 through September 30. During these months, open burning of tree limbs and brush, land clearing, and household paper products is not permitted. Open burning is never permitted in Jefferson County.

Use common sense before burning anything:

- Never burn within 50 feet of any structure
- Never burn near streams or sinkholes
- Never burn near landfills or under utility lines

To report illegal open burning or to learn more about open burning restrictions in your area, please call the Division for Air Quality's open burn hotline at 1-888-BURN-LAW (1-888-287-6529) or visit <http://air.ky.gov>.

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