

Ozone Season Begins May 1

Outdoor burning restricted to protect residents, air quality

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 28, 2025) - May marks the beginning of ozone season in the commonwealth. To protect families and improve air quality, outdoor burning in many counties is restricted until Sept. 30.

Ozone is protective when it occurs high in the stratosphere, but ground-level ozone is a summertime health risk, created when pollutants chemically react in the atmosphere in the presence of heat and sunlight. Ground-level ozone irritates breathing passages and can trigger asthma attacks. Asthma affects more than 380,000 Kentuckians. Open burning contributes to ozone pollution.

“Areas that historically have air quality problems are required to take additional measures during ozone season,” said Michael Kennedy, director of the Division for Air Quality. “These areas are more vulnerable to poor air quality during the summer months.”

Through September, outdoor burning of brush, tree limbs, leaves and natural growth from land clearing is not permitted in Boone, Boyd, Bullitt, Campbell, Kenton and Oldham counties. A portion of Lawrence County is also subject to open burning restrictions during ozone season. Open burning is restricted year-round in Jefferson County.

All of these counties have, at one time or another, exceeded air quality standards for ozone or particulate matter pollution.

Open burning restrictions during ozone season are not the same as burn bans, which may be declared by a county’s judge/executive during times of extreme wildfire hazard. The Division of Forestry maintains a list of known county burn bans at eec.ky.gov/CountyBurnBan. You can also contact your county judge/executive’s office to ensure there is no burn ban issued.

Burning trash – at any time of the year – is illegal in all Kentucky counties. State law prohibits the outdoor 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 such as fence posts, pallets and furniture are also illegal to burn, because they release dangerous toxins into the air. Items that cannot be recycled should be taken to a state-permitted landfill.

To learn more about open burning restrictions in your area, visit eec.ky.gov/Burn. To report illegal burning in your area, email burnlaw@ky.gov.

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