

## WHAT IS RESIDENTIAL BURNING?

Residential burning is the disposal of waste from a residence by burning it outdoors on the ground or in a container, such as a burn barrel.

## HOW IS IT HARMFUL TO YOUR HEALTH?

Residential waste burning is a serious health problem for many people exposed to the toxic air pollutants found in the smoke. Immediate effects may include burning or itchy eyes, shortness of breath, and asthma attacks. Long-term effects may include respiratory disease, lung or immune system damage, cancer, and premature death. Infants, small children, the elderly, and people with ailments like asthma and emphysema are especially sensitive to the toxic compounds produced by burning household waste.

## HOW DOES IT AFFECT COMMUNITY HEALTH?

Even in small communities, smoke travels easily through neighborhoods. Many persons view exposure to smoke from burning residential waste as a public nuisance, but it can be far more. Smoke released at ground level or close to the ground means pollution from residential burning can directly affect the health of those conducting the burning, their families and neighbors.

## WHY SHOULD WE REDUCE THESE TOXICS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT?

The toxic air pollutants produced from burning household waste can travel long distances and deposit on soil, plants, and in water. The leftover ash in the burn pile or barrel also contains toxic pollutants, which can spread into the soil and water. Animals and fish can ingest the pollutants and accumulate them in their tissue; plants can absorb them too. When this contaminated food is eaten, the pollutants are passed on to people. Therefore, simply avoiding the plume of smoke does not eliminate potential health risks.

## WHAT IS THE STATEWIDE RULE TO REDUCE THIS POLLUTION?

Beginning **January 1, 2004**, household waste cannot be burned at residences. The following restrictions will be enforced *statewide*.

1. If your city or town has not already banned yard waste burning, only vegetation grown on your property can be burned at your residence.
2. The use of burn barrels or backyard incinerators is not allowed.
3. If you are allowed to burn vegetation, you must start the fire with an ignition device approved by your local air district.
4. Outdoor residential burning can only occur on a permissive burn day in your local air district.

Many large air districts already ban outdoor residential waste burning. Check with your local air district for any additional restrictions. Most places in California also require a burn permit, to control residential burning in the community.

## ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS?

*No exemptions are allowed for burning plastics and household garbage.*

In recognition of limited availability of waste services in some of the more rural and sparsely populated areas of California, some exemptions *may* be allowed to burn paper and cardboard, and to use burn barrels, in designated geographic areas. Check with your local air district to determine if you live in an exemption area.

## WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH HOUSEHOLD WASTE?

**Reduce:** Avoid disposable items. Buy products in bulk or economy sizes rather than individually wrapped or single serving sizes. Buy durable, repairable products and products that can be recharged, reused, or refilled.

**Reuse:** Donate unwanted clothing, furniture and toys to friends, relatives, or charities. Give unwanted magazines and books to hospitals, schools, libraries, or nursing homes. Mend and repair rather than discard or replace.

**Recycle:** Separate recyclable items from residential waste and prepare them for a waste collection service or drop them off at a local recycling center.

**then, Dispose properly:** If you are unable to get routine waste collection service at your residence, combine trips to approved waste disposal facilities with other errands. Hazardous household waste such as solvents, oils, and oil-base paints must go to a local hazardous waste collection site.

## WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH BURN BARRELS AND ASH?

Do not dispose of ash on the ground or into waterways, instead take it to an approved disposal facility. Transfer stations and landfills accept ash and barrels separately. Let ash cool for at least three days to make certain no embers or heat can start a fire at the disposal location. Depending on the condition of the barrel, some certified metal recyclers and processors may accept used burn barrels. After the ash is removed, some landfills request a barrel be crushed or flattened and the bottom removed.

## WHAT APPROVED RECYCLING AND DISPOSAL FACILITIES ARE NEARBY?

Find the facilities nearest you by calling your County waste management or public works office. Learn what to do with various materials, by clicking on "Reuse & Recycling Centers" at the EARTH 911 website: <http://www.earth911.com/about-us/>. You can also find out about recycling, transfer, and disposal facilities at California Recycle's website: <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/SWFacilities/Directory/Search.aspx>.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO BURNING?**

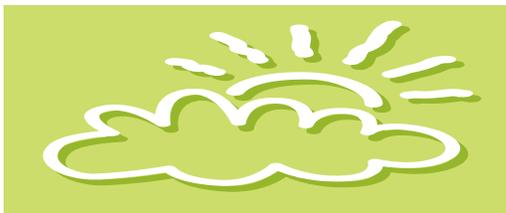
**Composting:** Organic material such as fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, eggshells, leaves, and grass clippings can be composted into mulch and natural fertilizer for gardens. You can learn more about composting at the U.S. EPA website: <http://www.epa.gov/wastes/conserve/composting/index.htm>.

**Paper Shredding:** Inexpensive paper shredders can be purchased to destroy personal papers at home, before recycling or disposal. Shredded newspaper can also be composted.

## **HOW CAN WE REDUCE VEGETATION BURNING AT RESIDENCES?**

Residents can compost their vegetation waste or "green waste" in their yards. Mulching lawnmowers eliminate clean-up time and cost. Chipped twigs and branches make excellent landscaping material and can also be composted. Many communities without regular green waste collection do have composting areas at the local landfill. For more information about alternatives to burning vegetation, including biomass conversion to energy, visit this website:

<http://www.arb.ca.gov/smp/biomass/biomass.htm>



**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE !**

☞ If you observe illegal residential burning, or if you would like to report someone who is a continual problem burner, contact your local air district.

☞ Contact the local fire department **ONLY** when there is an immediate emergency.

**For More Information,  
Contact Your Local Air District at:**

# **Burning Residential Waste**



**LEARN BEFORE YOU BURN !**

**Know the Law  
Know What to Do  
Know Who to Contact**

**California Air Resources Board  
website for Residential Burning:**  
<http://www.arb.ca.gov/smp/resburn/resburn.htm>

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California Environmental Protection Agency  
 **Air Resources Board**