



MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION

Open Burning Information and FAQs

April 7, 2020 Fire Inspector Tavis Millerov

On March 27, 2020, the fire authority issued a ban in conjunction with the State Fire Marshal and Michigan DNR in an effort to limit our responder's exposure during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. This has led to countless calls into the stations from citizens with questions and complaints about open burning rules. The initial ban that was issued has since been clarified.

If you are going to burn, the following safety requirements must be complied with and recommendations considered prior to burning. All fires must be at least 25' from any structure. They must be contained in a ring, pit, or appliance. They must have a means of extinguishing and be in constant attendance by an adult.

Q: Can I have a fire to cook food?

A: Yes, cooking fires are permitted and should meet the requirements for recreational fires.

Q: Can I have a small recreational fire in my backyard with my family?

A: Yes. Recreational fires should be limited to seasoned or dried natural wood. Burning of leaves, paper, bark, mulch, or rubbish is not allowed. This limits potential spread from uncontrolled embers and sparks.

Q: Can I burn my leaves and other organic materials such as last year's plants, twigs and branches that have fallen?

A: No. At this time, we are asking the public to limit open burning. Burning of yard waste and debris is the number one cause statewide for vegetation fires (wildfires) as they produce large amounts of uncontrollable sparks and embers.

Q: I have a natural gas or LPG fire pit or tabletop ring. Can I use that?

A: The answer is yes, but it depends. These appliances are often self-contained and are not intended to burn any other fuels (paper, wood, etc.). If yours does burn these other fuels, we ask that you refrain from using them.

Q: What is the big deal with burning? Everything is wet...

A: While it may appear everything is wet, as the grass is greening and plants are coming up. This is far from true. The relative humidity is very low, the wind is relatively steady and the sun is out. All of this leads to an extremely low moisture content of these materials and increases the ease at which they will ignite and spread, rapidly. It only takes a small spark to ignite disaster.

Q: Can I burn old construction materials or waste in a burn barrel?

A: No. These circumstances constitute the burning of waste, refuse, and violate local, state and federal laws. They also spread fire through the emission of sparks and embers. Burn barrels using dried firewood for the purpose of heating or cooking are allowable if provided with proper screening.

Q: I have some old boxes and papers I want to destroy. Can I burn those?

A: No, these items are considered trash and waste. They should instead be shredded and taken out with the trash or recycled. Burning these items creates large amounts of sparks and embers.

Please feel free to contact me directly at 517.853.4720 if you have additional questions.