

Alternatives to Burning Yard Material

Brush

Eau Claire County provides a residential brush disposal facility from March to November. This site is currently located on Birch Street in Eau Claire and is free to residents. The brush is chipped, and the resulting material may be taken by residents at no charge for use in landscaping or as a garden mulch.

If you have access to woods, or if you have a large yard where brush can be piled, leaving the material on the ground helps create excellent shelter and habitat for wildlife.

Grass and Leaves

Eau Claire County recommends that residents compost their grass and leaves along with other organic materials. Composting can be done at little or no expense, and with a minimum amount of effort. The resulting compost serves as an excellent soil conditioner and fertilizer for gardens, shrubs, and lawns.

Information on composting is available through the County's Planning Department (839-6190) and UW-Extension office (839-4712).

Need More Information on What Can Be Burned and Health Risks?

City/County Health Dept: 839-4718

Burning Trash Is a Harmful Risk!

Besides the legal chances you take, burning trash can also be harmful to you and your family's health. It can also be a nuisance to your neighbors.

Small particles and pollutants in smoke

Smoke Can Contain Hazardous Levels of the Following:

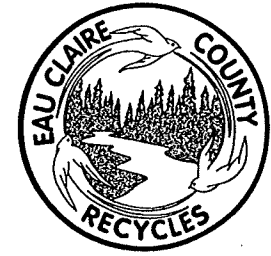
- ✓ Particulates
- ✓ Benzene
- ✓ Carbon Monoxide
- ✓ Dioxin
- ✓ Formaldehyde
- ✓ Hydrochloric acid
- ✓ Lead
- ✓ Nitrogen oxide
- ✓ Polyaromatic hydrocarbons
- ✓ Sulfuric acid

from burning trash and yard waste can cause eye, nose, skin, throat and lung irritation, stomach problems and headaches. Longterm exposure can increase your risk of cancer. Individuals with chronic disease, the elderly, children, and pregnant women may suffer more serious health effects when exposed to smoke.

Need More Information on Recycling?

County Planning Dept: 839-6190

Eau Claire County Recycling Program
Department of Planning and Development
731 Oxford Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54703



Yearning to Burn?

**Learn the Facts,
Assess the Risks,
Think Twice!**

**Information for
Homeowners and Residents**

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 427
Eau Claire, WI 54703

Background Information

Outdoor burning, for a variety of purposes, has long been an accepted practice by most Americans. It was the way settlers cleared the forests to make way for farms and is still used in places to clear fields of standing grass and small brush.

Burning is still widely used for a variety of reasons. Wildlife managers use it to establish habitat and restore prairies. And though there are serious health concerns related to burning, many homeowners continue to burn leaves in fall and/or use burn barrels to get rid of some of their trash.

But as America and Wisconsin have become more urbanized, and as we have learned more about air pollution problems which may result from burning, more restrictions have been put into law.

The purpose of this brochure is twofold: first, to help Eau Claire County residents understand local, county and state laws that pertain to burning; second, to understand the potential health consequences from burning. **Remember that just because something is legally allowed doesn't necessarily mean that it's a good idea to do it!**

Produced by the Eau Claire County Department of Planning and Development and the Eau Claire City/County Health Department, April, 1995.

Make Sure You Go to The Right Place!

Probably the most confusing thing related to burning is understanding that several different levels of government have rules related to what, when and where residents can burn. To be sure that you don't get into legal difficulties, it is important to be aware of all potential jurisdictions.

In some locations, the authority to issue a burn permit is held by local authorities -- the town clerk or the fire department, for example. In other instances, the DNR Forestry program regulates burning and Emergency Fire Wardens issue burning permits. Sometimes permits are required from both the DNR and the local government.

As a starting point, it is recommended that you first contact your local authorities, be it the town clerk or fire department.

Some Common Questions

What is the DNR's Role?

The DNR has three units which are concerned with various aspects of burning. The **Air Management** program, which does not issue permits for residential burning, deals with air pollution issues. Violations of these regulations can bring criminal charges, prison sentences and large fines.

The **DNR's Recycling Section** is interested in making sure that materials which must be recycled aren't burned.

DNR's Forestry Program issues permits through local Emergency Fire Wardens.

What Happens When Jurisdictions Clash?

The more restrictive policy takes precedence. For example, the DNR allows the burning of clean newspaper. However, Eau Claire County law prohibits the burning of recyclables and since newspapers are recyclable, residents may not burn them.

Safety, forest fire dangers, weather and forest fuel conditions determine if outdoor burning can be conducted on any given day or season of the year.

Who Can Burn Grass, Leaves and Brush?

Generally, residents may burn these on their own property, assuming local law permits this activity. However, burning these materials can create both a nuisance and a health hazard and isn't recommended. Please read the section on alternatives to burning further on in this brochure.

What About Burn Barrels?

State and County laws permit the open burning of small amounts of dry material as long as the following items are not included: asphalt, plastic, rubber, oily substances, and garbage. In practice, burn barrels can and should only be used for a

limited number of household items, primarily paper products that aren't recyclable, and unpainted and untreated wood.

Burning Versus Recycling

Eau Claire County's recycling code clearly prohibits the burning of newspapers, magazines or corrugated cardboard.

Examples of what can be burned, as long as burning is otherwise permitted by the local jurisdiction and doesn't create a nuisance or health hazard, would be the following:

- ✓ boxboard containers (cereal boxes)
- ✓ paper egg cartons
- ✓ kraft (brown) envelopes
- ✓ newspaper in small quantities used to start fires

Summary of County Law

The City/County Health Dept. enforces the County's sanitary and air pollution rules that prohibit the burning of garbage, as well as anything else which creates a nuisance or health hazard. For example, even if you receive a permit for burning leaves, you can still be cited for creating a nuisance if too much smoke is generated.