

Residential Burn Safety & Compliance Checklist

BurnPermitGuide.com
Complete ALL items before burning
Free permits: see State Guide

Permit #: _____ Date: _____ Location: _____ Wind: _____ mph

1. PERMIT & AUTHORIZATION

- Valid burn permit obtained for TODAY from my state forestry agency**

Free at state portal or by phone. Required in most states for any debris burn.

- Confirmed today is a Permissive Burn Day (CA, OR, WA air district areas)**

Check air district website. Required in addition to permit in these states.

- No active county or state burn ban in effect today**

Check state forestry site or county emergency management. TX: tfsweb.tamu.edu

- Permit number written here: _____**

Must be able to provide permit number on-site if asked by a ranger or official.

2. WEATHER CONDITIONS

- Wind speed is UNDER 15 mph — confirmed with weather app**

Most states prohibit burning above 15 mph. Check weather.gov for your exact location.

- Wind direction will NOT carry smoke/embers toward structures or roads**

Check direction and plan the burn orientation accordingly. Wind shifts happen.

- No Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch in effect (weather.gov)**

Do not burn during Red Flag conditions. Treat any fire weather alert as a prohibition.

- Fire danger level is LOW or MODERATE (not High, Very High, or Extreme)**

Check state forestry commission website. Very High/Extreme = no permits issued.

3. BURN PILE SETUP

- Pile contains ONLY natural vegetation: leaves, brush, untreated/unpainted wood**

No garbage, treated wood, plastics, tires, construction debris — illegal everywhere.

- Pile is 25+ ft from my own structures, 50+ ft from neighbor's structures**

State rules vary. Land-clearing burns require 500 ft. See safe-burn-setup.html

- 10-foot cleared perimeter (bare mineral soil or mowed) surrounds the pile**

Ground embers ignite dry grass within seconds. Clear buffer is essential.

- Pile size is manageable — can fully suppress if conditions change**

Max 10 ft diameter for one person. CA SRA permit: 4x4 ft maximum.

4. WATER SUPPLY & TOOLS

- Charged garden hose is turned on and reaches EVERY point of the burn pile**

Verify water pressure and hose reach before lighting. Not after.

- Flat-blade shovel is at the burn site for stirring ash and smothering embers**

Essential for thorough extinguishment — turn and wet the entire ash pile.

- Nearest outdoor spigot is accessible, unlocked, and functioning**

Confirm this before you light. A locked or frozen spigot in an emergency is catastrophic.

- Second water source or fire extinguisher available as backup**

Recommended for any burn, required for burns in dry conditions.

5. FIRE WATCH PROTOCOL

- I will remain on-site and in direct visual contact until fire is 100% extinguished**

Law in every state: never leave a permitted fire unattended. Not even briefly.

- I will extinguish before dark or before leaving the property — whichever comes first**

Never leave a fire burning overnight. Night winds can reignite ash piles.

- Extinguishment procedure: spread pile → wet → stir → wet again → feel with back of hand**

Fire is out when ash feels cool everywhere. Wet surfaces can still hold deep heat.

- I will return to the burn site the next morning to check for hot spots/smoldering**

Stumps and root systems hold heat for 24–48 hours and can reignite.

■ NEVER BURN — THESE MATERIALS ARE ILLEGAL TO BURN IN EVERY STATE, NO EXCEPTIONS

Household garbage / trash	Tires or rubber of any kind	Treated or painted wood
Plastics of any kind	Construction/demolition debris	Asphalt shingles / roofing
Electrical wire insulation	Petroleum products / solvents	Asbestos-containing materials

■ EMERGENCY ACTIONS — PRINT THIS AND KEEP AT BURN SITE

Situation	Immediate Action
Fire spreading in one direction	Wet that edge; use shovel/soil; call 911 if any doubt
Wind shifts toward structures	Reassess NOW; suppress advancing edge; call 911 if unsure
Fire too large to control	Call 911 immediately; move people at risk; do not endanger yourself
Smoldering rekindle next day	Wet thoroughly; stir; wet again; call 911 if actively flaming
Neighbor property threatened	Alert neighbors immediately; call 911; suppress advancing edge

BurnPermitGuide.com — Free residential burn permit guides for all 50 states · State Permit Checker Tool · Suppression Cost Calculator

Disclaimer: For informational purposes only. Always verify current rules with your state forestry agency before burning. Not affiliated with any government agency. Rules change — check before every burn.