

Open Burning Quick Reference Guide

BurnPermitGuide.com All 50 states · Free tools · Updated 2026

WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT BURN — APPLIES IN ALL 50 STATES

✓ Dry leaves and yard trimmings ✓ Natural brush and branches ✓ Untreated, unpainted natural wood ✓ Downed trees (no treatment or paint) ✓ Agricultural crop residue ✓ Storm debris — vegetative only ✓ Silvicultural slash (with permit)

✗ Household garbage or trash ✗ Treated or painted wood (ANY) ✗ Plastics of any kind ✗ Tires or rubber products ✗ Construction / demolition debris ✗ Asphalt shingles / roofing materials ✗ Electrical wire insulation

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS BY REGION

Region	States	Permit System	Cost	How to Get It
Southeast	GA FL NC SC VA TN AL MS	Mar-round (GA/FL/SC) or Feb–Apr (VA/TN)	Free	Call county forestry office or online portal
Mid-South	TX OK KS AR LA KY WV	County burn bans (TX/OK) or spring window	Free	TX: Check tfsweb.tamu.edu first; others: county office
Northeast	ME NH VT NY PA NJ	Spring dry season; local rules vary heavily	Free	ME/NH/VT: Town fire warden; others: local fire marshal
Midwest	MI WI MN OH IN MO	MI: Apr 1–May 31 statewide; others local	Free	MI: 1-800-292-3939; others: county DNR office
Mountain West	CO UT WY NM AZ NV ID MT	Check cofirebans.us; summer near-total	Free	CO: cofirebans.us; others: state forestry office
Pacific Coast	CA OR WA	CA: CAL FIRE + Air District burn day; OR/WA: State forest	Free	CA: fire.ca.gov/burnpermit; OR: ODF; WA: DNR

SAFE BURN SETUP — MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	Standard Rule	Notes
Burn permit	Required before lighting	Free; same-day; check fire danger
Wind speed	Under 15 mph	Stop burning if wind exceeds limit
Distance from your structure	25–50 ft minimum	Land-clearing: 500 ft
Distance from neighbor structure	50–150 ft minimum	VA mandatory period: 300 ft
Cleared perimeter	10 ft bare mineral soil	Prevents ground fire spread
Water supply	Charged hose reaching all pile points	Shovel also required at site
Attendance	Someone present continuously	Never leave any fire unattended
Extinguishment standard	Cold to back of hand everywhere	Stir + wet until no steam/heat
Next-day check	Morning after every significant burn	Stumps hold heat 24–48 hrs

PENALTIES QUICK REFERENCE

Violation	Typical Penalty	Notes
Burning without permit	\$100–\$2,500 + misdemeanor	Varies by state; air quality fines additional
Burning prohibited materials	Up to \$25,000/day	Air quality violation; applies everywhere
Burning during burn ban	Class A misdemeanor (TX: \$4,000)	Higher than standard permit violation
Escaped fire suppression	Full suppression cost (no cap)	\$1,000–\$5,000+/acre; can reach \$500K+
Burning during prohibition (WA)	Gross Misdemeanor: \$5,000 + 364 days	Most severe eastern-state penalty

BurnPermitGuide.com — Free permit guides, burn safety checklist, suppression cost calculator, pile size calculator, and burn season wizard · All tools free · Disclaimer: For informational purposes only. Always verify with your state forestry agency before burning. Rules change.