



Emergency Burning for Disasters

Information about managing wood waste, vegetation and deceased animals

Office of Air Quality

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Introduction:

- Timely disposal of waste is an important health and environmental issue following a disaster, such as a tornado, high winds, hailstorm, earthquake, fires, flood, ice storm, or explosion.
- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM's) Office of Air Quality (OAQ) has established a procedure for emergency burning of clean wood waste, vegetation and deceased animals to address an imminent threat to health or the environment following a disaster.
- The Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) requires animal carcasses to be disposed of in a complete burn. BOAH encourages using a licensed incinerator for the task. A traditional backyard burn pile or barrel will not provide a complete burn, especially for larger animals. Remains from incomplete carcass burns must be buried in compliance with BOAH's burial rule (under 4 feet of earth to the natural plane of the land). BOAH should be contacted for advice on proper management of deceased animals.
- IDEM encourages alternatives to burning, such as sale, reuse, recycling, or salvaging merchantable materials, grinding, chipping, and mulching or hauling to an approved landfill.

Emergency Burning Procedures:

- Emergency burning may not occur without prior approval from IDEM.
- IDEM is authorized to grant emergency burning approval of clean wood waste, vegetation, and deceased animals under 326 IAC 4-1-4(a)(2) and as provided by IC 4-21.5-4 (Administrative Order and Procedure Act (AOPA)).
- IDEM typically works with local agencies in a community for the burning of clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a disaster.
 - These local agencies may include the county health department, fire department, Mayor's Office, street department, or police department, and preferably one or two strategic sites will be identified for burning purposes.
 - Appropriate IDEM offices and the local health and sheriff's departments will be advised of all emergency burn approvals resulting from a disaster.
- When IDEM finds that waste poses an imminent health or environmental hazard, IDEM may grant prior oral approval to burn clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a natural disaster. Oral approval will be followed by written approval within seven (7) days and shall contain any conditions on emergency burning established in the oral approval. Common conditions on emergency burning are listed below.

Emergency Burning Conditions:

- Emergency burning must comply with the conditions established in the oral approval. Common conditions for burning under these circumstances are as follows:
 - No asbestos-containing material shall be burned.
 - No burning shall be conducted during unfavorable meteorological conditions, such as: high winds or air stagnation; or when an open burning ban has been officially declared by either appropriate state or local officials; or when a pollution alert and ozone action

day (Air Quality Action Day) has been declared. You may contact IDEM's Office of Air Quality at (317) 232-8252 or toll-free (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-8252 (in Indiana) for information regarding pollution alert and ozone action days.

- Burning shall be conducted during daylight hours only and all fires shall be extinguished prior to sunset.
- If at any time the fire creates an air pollution problem, a threat to public health, a nuisance, or a fire hazard, the burning shall be extinguished.
- Adequate firefighting equipment shall be on-site for extinguishing purposes during burning time.
- No burning shall take place within 100 feet of any structure or power line, or 300 feet of a frequently traveled road, fuel storage area, or pipeline.
- Fire(s) must be attended at all times until completely extinguished.
- Fire(s) shall not be ignited or fueled with tires or smoke-producing petroleum products. Minimal amounts of clean burning petroleum products may be used for starting fires.
- The verbal approval will expire ten days from the date of issuance unless otherwise noted in the written approval.
- All burning must comply with other federal, state, and local laws and ordinances.

Additional Information/Oral Approval to Burn:

- For oral approval to burn clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a disaster, on an emergency basis, please contact the IDEM Office of Air Quality. The contacts listed below should be made in the order listed until contact is made with an authorized individual:
 - OAQ Open Burning Approval Staff: (317) 233-2721, or (317) 233-1136
 - OAQ Open Burning Section Chief: (317) 234-1300
 - OAQ Compliance & Enforcement Branch Chief: (317) 233-1134
 - General Inquiries: BurnApprovals@idem.IN.gov
- For additional information on the proper management of deceased animals, contact the Indiana State Board of Animal Health at (317) 544-2400 or toll-free (877) 747-3038.