



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Emergency Burning for Disasters

www.idem.IN.gov

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Emergency Burning:

- Timely disposal of waste is an important health and environmental issue following a disaster, such as a tornado, high winds, hail storm, earthquake, fires, flood, ice storm, or explosion.
- While burning is certainly not encouraged, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's (IDEM's) Office of Air Quality (OAQ) recognizes that emergency burning may, in some cases, be needed to address an imminent threat to health or the environment following a disaster.
- IDEM has established a procedure for emergency burning of clean wood waste, vegetation, and deceased animals resulting from such a disaster.
- 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 Burn Procedures:

- Emergency burning may not occur without approval from IDEM.
- IDEM is authorized to grant emergency burning approval under 326 IAC 4-1-4(a)(2) and as provided by IC 4-21.5-4 (Administrative Order and Procedure Act (AOPA)).
- When a request to burn clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a natural disaster is received, and IDEM finds that the waste poses an imminent health or safety hazard, IDEM may approve the request.
 - IDEM may grant verbal approval to burn the clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a natural disaster.
 - This will be followed by written approval within seven days of the verbal approval/denial and, if approved, the written approval shall contain any conditions on emergency burning established in the verbal approval.
- IDEM typically works with one or two 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 variance approvals resulting from a disaster.

Emergency Burn Conditions:

- Standard conditions for burning under these circumstances are as follows:
 - Verbal approval by IDEM must be granted prior to any burning.
 - Only clean wood material, vegetation, or deceased animals may be burned, and only after other disposal methods have been found to be impracticable. Alternatives that must be considered include separating for recycling, hauling to an approved landfill, or salvaging merchantable materials.
 - 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 (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 30 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/Verbal Approval to Burn:

- For verbal approval to burn clean wood waste, vegetation, or deceased animals resulting from a disaster, please contact the following IDEM Office of Air Quality staff. The staff listed below should be contacted in the order listed until contact is made with an authorized person:
 - IDEM Office of Air Quality Compliance and Enforcement staff: (317) 502-2251
 - IDEM Office of Air Quality Compliance and Enforcement staff: (317) 233-5521 or (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-5521
 - IDEM Office of Air Quality Compliance and Enforcement staff: (317) 232-8457, (800) 451-6027, ext. 2-8457, or (317) 910-6314