



## **Planning to Burn on Your Land?**

The Otero County Fire Fighters Association (OCFFA) would like to remind anyone who intends to burn vegetative materials on their property that private burns are regulated by the State of New Mexico under the Open Burning Regulation, Section 20.2.60 of the New Mexico Administrative Code. Otero County also regulates open burning under County Ordinances 91-04, 97-02 and 05-03.

These State and County regulations allow open burning of natural materials such as grass, weeds, brush, tree limbs, woody debris, and crop stubble by private individuals under certain conditions. Open burning of items such as trash, plastic, paper, painted or processed wood, and any hazardous material is prohibited.

How do you know if your planned burn is safe and legal? The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the OCFFA have made it easy for you to ensure that the burn you are planning meets the requirements of the State of New Mexico and Otero County by creating the Burn Checklist on the back side of this page.

Remember, you are solely responsible if your burn gets out of control. If you have violated any of these regulations you may end up paying for property that burns due to your negligence or worse, you could face fines or jail time. Each year, wildfires cause millions of dollars in damage and sometimes result in deaths.

Why take a chance? Just answer the 10 questions on the back of this sheet. If you answer NO to any of them your burn is illegal. Contact your local fire department if you need assistance. If your burn does not meet these requirements, you can haul debris to a slash pit or waste facility in your area. Contact the Otero County landfill at 434-1538 for more information.

And consider these alternatives to open burning:

Start a compost pile in your back yard of leaves, grass, coffee grounds, fruit and vegetables. Finished compost makes excellent soil enrichment for gardens and flower beds.

Mowing frequently is very effective in keeping weeds and grasses at a safe height in the event of a fire, and the mulch can be incorporated into the soil without the need for burning.

Chipping is a great way to transform debris into natural ground cover for mud-prone areas, or bedding for flower gardens.

For more information, contact the New Mexico Environment Department at 1-800-219-6157, or <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us>.

# BURN CHECKLIST

If you answer "NO" to ANY of the following questions, the burn you are planning is not permitted by law:

**1. Will you be burning less than 10 acres or more than 1,000 cubic feet of piled material per day?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

- To calculate the total cubic feet for each pile you plan to burn:  
Length x Width x Height = volume in cubic feet
- If you are planning to burn more than 10 acres or 1,000 cubic feet of material, your burn also falls under the NM Smoke Management Program. Contact the Air Quality Bureau at 1-800-224-7009.

**2. Is the burn area at least 300 feet from neighbors, dwellings, workplaces, or places where people congregate?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**3. Has the material to be burned had time to dry?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

- Weeds and tall grasses that have been cut and dried will burn more easily and produce less smoke.
- Trees and branches over 6 inches in diameter take 90 days to dry.
- Trees and branches 2 to 6 inches in diameter take 45 days to dry.
- Brush, vines, bushes, prunings and small branches take 15 days to dry.
- Leaves, field crops and weeds need 7 dry days.

**4. Do the piles and acreage to be burned contain only vegetative materials? Are they free of paper, plastic, trash and hazardous materials?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**5. If you plan to burn more than one acre or 1000 cubic feet of material in a day, have you provided prior notice of the burn date and location to neighbors within 1/4 mile of the burn area?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**6. Will you be starting the burn at least than 1 hour after sunrise, and extinguishing the burn at least 1 hour before sunset?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

- Burning in the morning when the winds are calm and the relative humidity tends to be higher will help with a safer burn.

**7. Will you be attending the burn AT ALL TIMES, until it is FULLY EXTINGUISHED?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

**8. Have you verified that no Red Flag Warning has been issued?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

- Go to <http://www.srh.noaa.gov>, scroll down to the map, and click on "El Paso".
- Burning on Red Flag days is prohibited.

**9. Have you verified that there are no temporary burn bans in place by either the County or the State?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

- Contact your local fire department or the Otero County Sheriffs Department.

**10. Have you notified the Otero County Sheriffs Department at 505-437-2210 or 1-800-874-3743 prior to burning?** Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_