

## Fire as a Management Tool



Fire adequately controlled and managed (i.e. prescribe or broadcast burning) can be as an efficient and effective tool in land management as it is for heating, cooking, recreation, or industry. It should always be recognized that uncontrolled fire or “wildfire” is a devastating force. In recognition of this and other factors such as air pollution and conditions of extreme danger, the best skill and judgment should be used to minimize risks and environmental damage.

Broadcast or prescribe burning does not exempt you from the current restrictions in your area. To burn an area over 1/4 acre in size, first contact a DNR Forest Ranger or Department Fire Control Staff who may then issue a special burning permit. Alternative procedures should be used when practicable.

## Burning Permit Required?

Here's how it works...

1. Look at the map of Wisconsin and determine where and when you would like to burn.
2. Are you going to burn in an **intensive**, **extensive**, or **cooperative** area?

**If you decide to burn in an intensive area:**

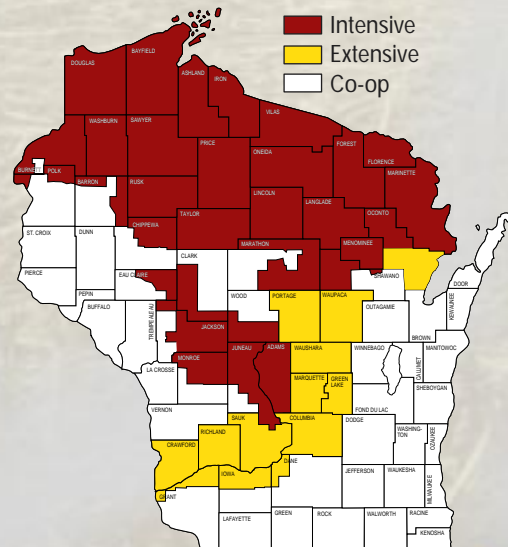
Permits are required when burning anytime the ground is not snow covered. Contact your local DNR Office or Emergency Fire Warden.

**If you decide to burn in an extensive area:** Permits are required anytime the ground is not snow covered during the months of January, February, March, April, and May. Contact your local DNR Office or Emergency Fire Warden.

**If you decide to burn in a cooperative area or inside the limits of incorporated villages or cities:** These areas are primarily protected by local and county officials. They can and do create ordinances, as well as permit requirements. Contact your local Fire Department or Local Officials to obtain burning regulation information.

3. Obtain a permit, if required. Check the permit for date and time restrictions.
4. Have fire-fighting tools, such as water and shovel handy; avoid burning on windy days.
5. Never leave your fire unattended.
6. Be certain your fire is dead out before you leave.
7. You are responsible for **all** suppression costs incurred from a wildfire caused by your negligence!

## Forest Fire Protection



## What can individuals do instead of burning household and yard wastes?

1. **Reduce** - Buy in bulk or larger quantities and demand less packaging on the products you buy.
2. **Reuse** - Find someone else who can use it, have a yard sale, or donate it to a resale organization.
3. **Recycle** - Separate newspaper, office paper, cardboard, corrugated cardboard, magazines, aluminum, metal and acceptable plastics.
4. **Compost** - Collect leaves and plant clippings for composting or brush piles in the woods for wildlife habitat.
5. **Chip** - Collect brush and clean wood to make mulch or decorative chips, or use it as heating fuel in wood stoves or boilers.
6. **Dispose** - Discard allowable waste materials at a licensed landfill.

Visit [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/fire](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/fire) for more information on burning regulations and permits in Wisconsin. Remember... Wisconsin needs your help in preventing wildfires!

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# Wisconsin Forest Fire Laws and Regulations

**“Burning debris is the number one cause of wildfires in Wisconsin!”**

This pamphlet contains a summary of forest fire laws and associated rules; it is not a complete set of laws. For additional information, please consult Sections 26.11 and 26.12 Wisconsin Statutes, and Chapter NR 30, Wisconsin Administrative Code.

## Burning Regulations and Permits

Burning permits are required by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in many parts of the state to conduct outdoor burning. Persons wishing to burn should contact their local DNR Office, Emergency Fire Warden, or Local Officials *before* burning to find out if a burning permit is required.

Burning permits may also be required by local ordinances within incorporated cities and villages. Contact local government officials or the fire department for more information.

### “Burning permits are free!”

The image shows a Wisconsin Burning Permit form. It includes fields for 'Permit Number', 'Date', and 'Location'. The location is filled out as '123 Main St, Green Bay, WI 54903'. There are checkboxes for 'BURNING PERMITS REQUIRED' and 'FIRE DANGER MODERATE TODAY!'. The form also contains several numbered instructions for burning safely.

*With proper permits*, individuals may burn small amounts of dry leaves, plant clippings, and brush as long as weather conditions do not pose a fire hazard (where not prohibited by local ordinance).

Individuals may also burn small amounts of dry combustible rubbish that includes paper, cardboard and clean untreated-unpainted wood as long as weather conditions do not pose a fire hazard (where not prohibited by local ordinance).

The Department of Natural Resources strongly discourages from using **burn barrels**. Burn barrels emit dioxin, acid vapors, carcinogenic tars, and “heavy metals” such as lead, cadmium and chromium, as well as unhealthy amounts of carbon monoxide. Note: small businesses, commercial enterprises, and industries may not

use burn barrels or engage in other kinds of open burning for any waste generated by the businesses.



**This is *not* a “campfire!”**

Materials that may not be burned in a burn barrel or debris pile also may not be burned in a furnace, wood stove or similar home heating system.

*Cooking, warming or campfires* do not require a burning permit and are allowed anytime, except during emergency forest fire regulations. This exemption for permits applies to fires **solely** set and used for this purpose. Remember, bon fires and trash fires are not campfires!



**This *is* a “campfire!”**

## Wisconsin Laws prohibit anyone from burning the following materials:

1. Wet, combustible rubbish, such as wet cardboard or paper
2. Oily substances, such as oily or greasy rags, oil filters, etc.
3. Asphalt, such as asphalt shingles or tar paper
4. Plastics of any kind, including plastic bottles and plastic bags
5. Rubber products, including tires and hoses

## Forest Fire Regulations and Restrictions

### The following activities are UNLAWFUL:

1. **Burning without a permit.**  
To burn without a permit or contrary to the written restrictions on a permit.
2. **Failure to extinguish.**  
To set a fire or assist in setting a fire, including a backfire, on any lands in this state and fail to totally extinguish the fire before leaving it.
3. **Allow fire to escape.**  
To set a fire or assist in setting a fire, including a backfire upon your land or land under your control and to allow the fire to become a wildfire.
4. **Arson fires.**  
To intentionally set fire to the land or marsh of another.
5. **Destroy property.**  
To destroy, deface, or molest any poster or warning notice, forest fire sign, forest protection equipment, or property.
6. **Negligent handling of burning material.**  
To handle burning material in a highly negligent manner that creates an unreasonable risk or high probability of death or harm for another person or serious damage to another's property.

## Liability for Wildfires Suppression Costs

Any person, firm, or corporation who sets fires on any land and allows it to become a forest fire, shall be liable for all expenses incurred in the suppression of the fire by the state or town in which the fire occurred.

## Civil Liability for Damages

Any person, whose property is injured or destroyed by fires, may recover, in a civil action, the value of timber, young forest growth, or any other damages suffered, from person's causing such fires.

## How Forest Fire “Danger” is Measured

This sign found at many Ranger Stations throughout the state, displays the current local fire danger rating. The rating shown on the sign refers to the burning condition list below:



### Extreme

Explosive conditions. Fires start easily, burn fiercely and crown readily. Often very difficult or impossible to control during the day. Burning is not recommended.

### Very High

Very dangerous conditions. Fires start easily, spread very rapidly, crown and spot. Very difficult to control. Burning is not recommended.

### High

Dangerous conditions. Fires start readily from a match or sparks, spread quickly, and spot readily. Difficult to control. Burning is not recommended.

### Moderate

Fires start from a match or burning embers, spread quickly in dry grass or leaves. Burn with extreme caution.

### Low

Fires will start from an open flame, spread slowly and in absence of wind tend to go out. The safest time to burn.