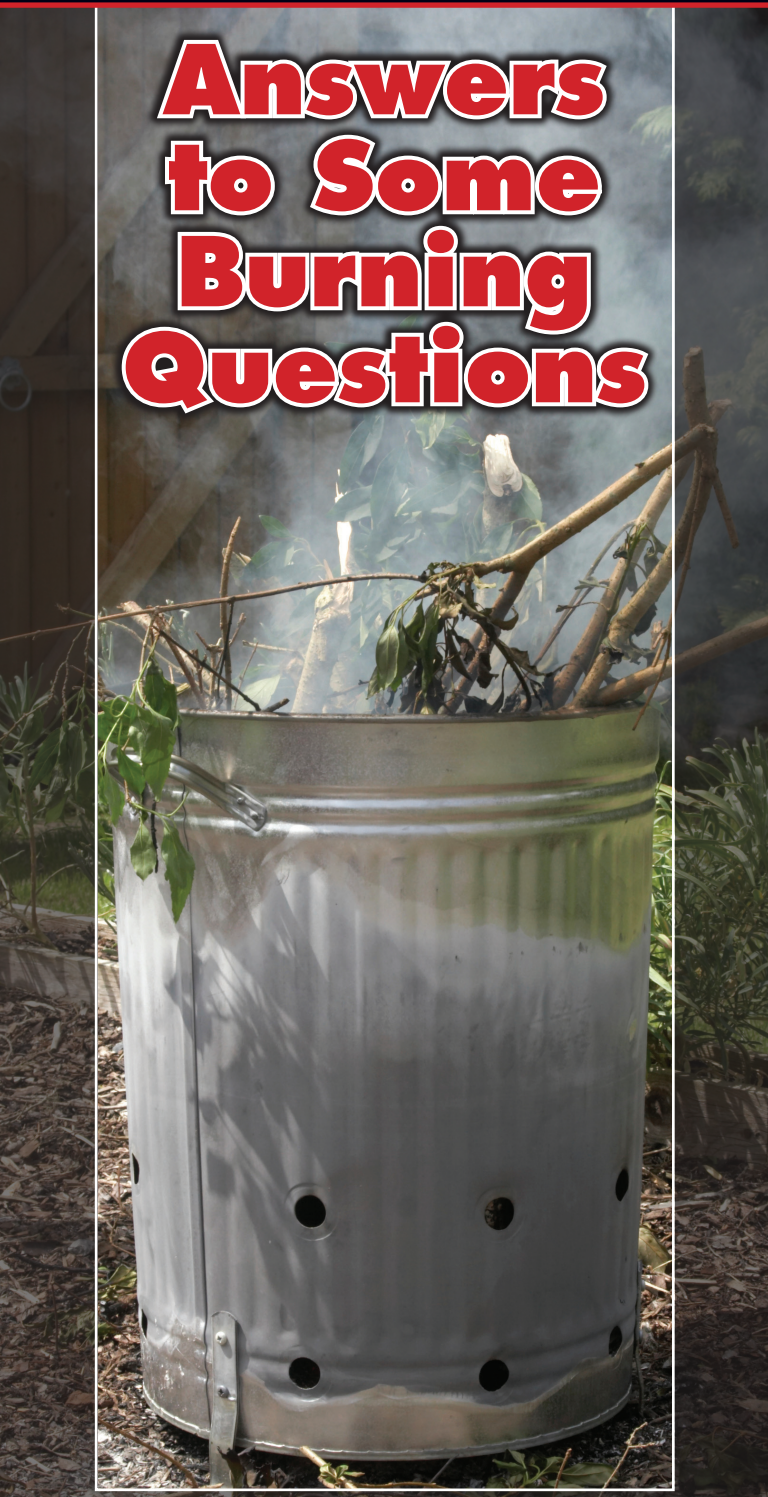
Do's and Don'ts for Outdoor Burning at Your Residence

Answers to Some Burning Questions



GI-415 3/11 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Burning Trash or Land-Clearing Debris:

Some Do's and Don'ts to Remember

Do's

- Call your local officials (for example, your city or county code enforcement office, your local fire department, or your city or county environmental health department) to make sure that burning is not against any local law, such as a city ordinance. Also make sure that a burn ban is not in place for your area (to prevent wildfires, counties often ban burning during dry weather).
- Burn only allowable trash (see below) and land-clearing debris that was generated at the residence.

Don'ts

- Don't create a traffic hazard: make sure that smoke doesn't blow across roads.
- Don't burn anything that may create excessive smoke or toxic fumes, such as plastic, tires, or shingles.
- Don't burn trash or anything else from a business.
- Don't cause a nuisance: make sure you don't smoke out your neighbors.
- Don't burn anything during a Burn Ban or during a Red Flag Warning.

When is outdoor burning okay?

To protect the quality of the air we breathe in Texas, the TCEQ rules prohibit outdoor burning anywhere in the state. However, the TCEQ allows for exceptions in specific situations when the burning activity does not pose a health threat or nuisance and is an acceptable practice.

Ceremonial and Recreational Fires

The TCEQ allows bonfires, campfires, and cooking fires, as long as they do not cause nuisance smoke or traffic hazards and as long as special attention is given to safety. Never burn anything on the "Never Burn" list, below.

Waste-Disposal Fires

In some areas of the state where the local government doesn't provide trash pickup services, outdoor burning is allowed for the disposal of some household wastes. Under certain conditions, you may also burn brush from on-site land clearing.

Are there alternatives to burning?

There are several alternatives that you should explore before you resort to burning. The four principal alternatives are:

- Recycling
- Composting
- Mulching
- Disposal in local landfills

Are there any items I should not burn?

There are some items that you should never burn, under any circumstances, because such burning would pose a safety or health threat. The basic five "Never Burn" items are listed below:

Never Burn

- Electrical insulation
- Tires
- Treated lumber (such as in construction or demolition waste)
- Heavy oils or asphalt materials
- Potentially explosive materials or chemicals

How can I find more information?

There are numerous ways to get more information about outdoor burning in Texas.

- Visit the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's website, at <www.tceq.texas.gov>.
- Read the Outdoor Burning rules, 30 TAC 111.201–221, by clicking on "Rules" on the TCEQ home page.
- Download TCEQ publication RG-049, Outdoor Burning in Texas, for a description of the rule in plain language and FAQs by clicking on "Publications" on the TCEQ home page.
- Call the Small Business and Local Government Assistance Hotline, 800-447-2827, or go to <www.TexasEnviroHelp.org>.
- Call your TCEQ Regional Office, at 888-777-3186.
- Find a map of current county burn bans and related maps (such as fire-danger and drought-index maps) by going to <txforestservice.tamu.edu> and clicking on "Fire Danger/Advisories."
- Learn more ways to do your part for the Texas environment by going to <takecareoftexas.org>.

Take Care of Texas
www.takecareoftexas.org

How is our customer service?

Fill out our online customer-satisfaction survey at <www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/customersurvey>.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

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