Burning regulated even in country

To often, individuals and farmers living outside municipalities do not realize that Ohio has regulations on burning vegetation or discarded trash.

Ohio limits what individuals living in rural areas can burn, where they burn, and when they can burn. Ohio laws also include requirements that must be followed for certain types of open burning.

Rural open burning activities fall under the jurisdictions of various agencies depending on the type of burning.

If the burning activity may affect air quality, it will fall under Ohio Environmental Protection Agency rules. If it may affect wildlife activities, it will fall under Ohio Department of Natural Resources regulations.

Ohio law allows the burning of agricultural waste in unrestricted areas. Agricultural waste generally includes material generated from routine production practices.

This material would include crop and landscape debris, debris from stream flooding, and various containers of products used by the crop and livestock industry. Pesticide containers and seed bags may be burned as long as the label or seed tag states that the manufacturer has identified open burning as a safe disposal method.

Items that would not fall under the definition of agricultural waste and could not be added to a burn pile include: standing or fallen buildings, building materials, food waste, dead animals, materials made from petroleum or containing plastic, rubber, grease or asphalt, motor vehicles or auto parts.

Ohio law limits the location of burning of agricultural waste. Agricultural waste may only be burned on the property where the waste is generated. The waste may not be taken to a different property for burning and a farmer cannot receive and burn waste from another property.

Burning is also restricted within certain distances from villages and buildings inhabited by people (the distance depends on the local population). The fire must also be at a location that does not obscure visibility for roads, railroads or airfields.

Rural burning restrictions also apply depending on the time of year. Ohio regulations do not allow open burning from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. from March through May, and during October and November.

The abundance of dry plant material and dry winds during these months and limited availability of volunteer fire departments during the day is the rationale for this restriction.

Farmers are exempt from some of these restrictions if the open burning occurs in a plowed field or garden that is at least 200 feet from any woodland, brush area, or field containing dry grass or other flammable material.

Plowed would imply no plant residue on the soil surface that may ignite from an open fire.

Open burning should only occur when atmospheric conditions will readily dissipate any smoke and potential contaminant. If weather conditions are foggy, rainy or causing air inversions, smoke and contaminants will not readily disperse and the farmer should not burn materials.

Ohio law requires that anyone who starts a fire near trees and brush must take steps to prevent the fire from escaping. All surrounding flammable material must be removed, and other reasonable precautions must be taken to keep the fire under control. The fire needs to be extinguished or safely covered before leaving the area.

The wastes should be stacked and dried for efficient burning, and weather conditions should not prevent dispersion of smoke and emissions. If the size of an agricultural waste pile exceeds 20 feet in diameter by 10 feet in height, the farmer must provide written notification of the burn to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency at least 10 days before burning.

The Ohio EPA also requires written notification at least 10 days before a burning event in restricted areas. Restricted areas are defined as locations near larger population densities.

Restricted areas include areas inside villages and zones surrounding villages, depending on population densities. The fire must not obscure road, railroad, and airfield visibility.

In addition, the fire must be at least 1,000 feet from any building inhabited by people even in low-population density areas.

Local governments may have additional laws that regulate burning activities. Contact the fire department to see if an area has additional regulations for local burning.

In summary, open fires are regulated even in the country. The Ohio EPA oversees regulations on open burning that may produce harmful air emissions that may affect human and environmental health. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources regulates open burning to minimize damage to woods and local wildlife.

Cities and townships may have additional local restrictions on open burning for a given community.

Additional information may be found about open burning regulations at Ohio EPA Division of Air Pollution Control, at the ODNR Division of Forestry (http://forestry.ohiodnr.gov/burninglaws) and at Ohio State University Extension's Ohio farm office, https://farmoffice.osu.edu/blogtags/ohio-open-burning-law

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