



Department of Environmental Conservation

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DEC REMINDS NEW YORKERS THAT RESIDENTIAL BRUSH BURNING IS PROHIBITED THROUGH MAY 14

Burn Ban Reduces Wildfire Risks, Protects Lives and Property

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reminds New Yorkers that with warming temperatures and dry conditions, residential brush burning in towns with less than 20,000 residents is prohibited from March 16 through May 14. With the lack of snow cover over much of the state and unseasonably warm temperatures forecasted, experts believe conditions for wild fires will be heightened in the coming weeks.

“While many people may associate wildfires with the western United States, the early start of spring weather, dry conditions and lack of snow pack are increasing the risk for wildfires in New York,” said Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos. “New York prohibits residential burning during the high-risk fire season to reduce wildfires and protect people, property and natural resources. Since being enacted in 2009, the ban has been extremely effective in reducing the number of wildfires, and we need all residents to put safety first and follow the brush burning ban.”

DEC posts a fire danger rating forecast map on a daily basis on its website at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html>. Currently, fire conditions in the northern part of the state are low risk, however the Hudson Valley and Long Island regions are experiencing moderate risk conditions.

Open burning of debris is the largest single cause of spring wildfires in the state. When temperatures are warmer and the past fall's debris and leaves dry out, wildfires can start and spread easily and be further fueled by winds and a lack of green vegetation.

New York enacted strict restrictions on open burning in 2009 to help prevent wildfires and reduce emissions. The regulations allow residential brush fires in towns during most of the year, but prohibit such burning in spring when most wildfires occur. In the five-year period since the ban was enacted, the average number of spring fires per year decreased by 33.4 percent, from 3,297 in 2009 to 1,649 in 2015.

The DEC also urges citizens to employ alternatives to burning brush, like chipping wood and downed branches for use as mulch and composting yard waste, leaves and plant clippings for use in gardens.

Campfires using charcoal or untreated wood are allowed, but people should never leave fires unattended and must completely extinguish them before leaving the area. Burning garbage or leaves is prohibited year-round.

(MORE)

Some towns, primarily in and around the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park, are designated “fire towns,” and open burning is prohibited year-round in these municipalities unless an individual or group has a written permit from DEC. To find out whether a municipality is designated a “fire town” or to obtain a permit, contact the appropriate DEC regional office. A list of regional offices is available at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/558.html>.

Violators of the open burning state regulation are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for a first offense. To report environmental law violations call 1-800-TIPP DEC (1-800-847-7332), or [report online](#) on DEC’s website.

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