

ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

MICHAEL ABRACZINSKAS
Director



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

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DISPOSAL OF STORM DEBRIS/OPEN BURNING

Following a major storm, many counties and municipalities arrange to pick up limbs and other debris piled along the curb or residents can haul debris to approved landfills. Debris should be separated into distinct piles for vegetation (trees, branches, limbs); household trash (garbage, paper, food, etc.); and other materials (building matter, carpets, furniture, etc.).

Homeowners can burn yard trimmings if it's allowed under local ordinances and public pickup is not available. Other allowable burning includes fireplaces, campfires, outdoor barbecues and bonfires for festive occasions. Landowners may be allowed to burn vegetation to clear land or clean up storm debris, but they should check first with the nearest [Division of Air Quality regional office](#). People seeking to burn may also need permits from the N.C. Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Limit open burning as much as possible because the smoke from outdoor fires can cause serious health problems and pollute the air. For example, a study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found that backyard burning of trash from a family of four can emit as much of some pollutants, such as dioxin and furan, as a well-controlled municipal incinerator serving tens of thousands of households. In particular, health hazards arise from burning:

- Demolition debris and building materials, including lumber;
- Asphalt shingles and heavy oils;
- Wire, plastics and other synthetic materials;
- Garbage, paper and cardboard;
- Tires and other rubber products;
- Paints and household or agricultural chemicals.

Burning construction debris could jeopardize FEMA reimbursement for debris collection and disposal if the debris contains hazardous waste (such as asbestos) or would result in an air quality violation.

Contractors and municipalities are encouraged to grind vegetative debris into wood chips when possible, but should call the nearest DAQ regional office for more detailed guidelines on allowable burning.



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Air Quality

217 West Jones Street | 1641 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1641

919.707.8400