



A Guide for Agricultural Open Burning:

Best Practices for Piling Vegetation

Setting Farmers Up for Success When Planning to Request Approval to Burn

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) is now conducting visual inspections of all agricultural open burning applications to ensure the health and safety of the general public. Following this guide should help to ensure these inspections go smoothly, with minimal Department requests made prior to obtaining approval to burn.

Where to Pile:

- As far away as possible from other people and structures. The distance may need to be balanced between multiple neighbors
- Away from power lines, roads and other infrastructure
- On the property from which it originated



How to Pile:

- Create smaller piles with ample space to control a fire. Do not pile vegetation any larger than what can be extinguished.
- Recommended pile size should be no larger than 15' x 15' x 15', or about 3,300 cubic feet.
- During inspections, Department personnel will use survey wheels and other equipment to accurately measure the dimensions of piles.

When to Pile:

- Allow time for the vegetation to dry.
- Additional time will shrink the piles, making them smaller and thus more extinguishable.
- Well ahead of the May 1 deadline. Failure to plan in a timely fashion does not constitute an emergency on behalf of the Department.
- The number of piles allowed to be burned at any given time may be limited. As a result, additional days may be required to burn all the intended piles, and the number of days may be limited due to weather conditions.
- Vegetation that has been accumulated from land-clearing operations for the construction of structures, even those customarily used in conjunction with agricultural operations, may not be burned.

What to Pile:

- Only vegetation that has originated from the property.
- No refuse, waste or garbage is allowed (including, but not limited to lumber, furniture, cardboard, tires, construction or demolition materials).
- If prohibited material is found to be intermingled with allowable vegetation, the Department will require the pile to be dismantled prior to burning, to completely remove the prohibited material.



Why it Matters:

- Burning vegetation releases hazardous substances, such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and particulate matter (PM).
- These substances are known to cause cancer and damage the heart and lungs of healthy people, but they are of particular consequence to the young, the old and people with existing health conditions.
- Burning to save money may be beneficial to a farmer, but it can cause very serious health impacts for other people.

Once you have followed a few simple steps, you should be able to apply online.

What to do Next:

- Submit your agricultural burn application(s) online using the Digital DNREC portal: permitting.dnrec.delaware.gov/signin.

Agricultural burns that occur without prior approval from the Department may result in fines and/or criminal charges.



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