



## CHECKLIST AND GUIDE FOR OPEN BURNING OF VEGETATIVE MATERIAL

(such as slash, weeds, yard trimmings and clippings)

Complete this checklist BEFORE YOU BURN to see if it is allowed under the Open Burning Regulation (20.2.60 NMAC).

	YES	NO
* 1. Will you be burning no more than 10 acres or 1,000 cubic feet of piled material per day? (If NO, this regulation does not apply; see 20.2.65 NMAC, Smoke Management.)		
* 2. Have you considered using alternatives to burning, such as chipping or composting? (See list)		
* 3. Will the burning be at least 300 feet from neighbors (dwellings, workplaces, places where people congregate)?		
4. Is the material to be burned as dry as practicable? (see recommendations)		
5. Is the material free of paper, plastic and other trash? (see regulation for very limited exemption for plastic sheeting covering piled slash)		
6. If the burning will be more than 1 acre per day, or 100 cubic feet of piled material per day, have you provided prior notice of the burn date and location to neighbors within 1/4 mile of the burn?		
7. Have you notified the local firefighting authority prior to burning?		
* 8. Will you be starting the burn no earlier than 1 hour after sunrise, and extinguishing the burn at least 1 hour before sunset?		
9. Will you be attending the burn AT ALL TIMES, until it is fully extinguished?		
10. Will you be using only the minimum amount of auxiliary fuel necessary, and no oil heavier than No. 2 diesel (no motor oil)?		

If the answer is NO to any of these questions, your burn is NOT ALLOWED under the Open Burning Regulation (20.2.60 NMAC).

\* If your NO answers are only for one or more of these questions (1, 2, 3, and 8), you MAY be allowed to burn under the Smoke Management Regulation (20.2.65 NMAC), if you meet the requirements of that regulation. For more information, see [www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb), or call the Air Quality Bureau at 1-800-224-7009.

## **How to determine "pile volume"**

"Pile volume" refers to the overall volume of the pile, including the air space between the solid materials. Pile volume can be calculated from the overall dimensions (length, width, height) of the pile.

Simple Method: A simple, approximate calculation is to multiply the length times the width times the height of the pile in feet. For example, a pile that is 10 feet wide, 5 feet long, and 3 feet high would have an approximate volume of:

Length X Width X Height = volume in cubic feet

10 ft. X 5 ft. X 3 ft. = 150 cubic feet

This simple method assumes the pile has straight sides, so it overestimates the volume of rounded piles. If you use this method and determine that the pile volume is less than 1,000 cubic feet, then you can be sure that your burn is small enough to be covered by the Open Burning Regulation.

Complex Methods: Pile volume can be calculated more precisely using complex geometric formulas that take into account the rounded shape of most piles. More information on these methods is available in the Smoke Management Program's Guidance Document, Appendix K ("Guidance on How to Calculate Fuel Loading").

Mixtures of piled and nonpiled material: To determine daily burn amount when you are burning a combination of piled and nonpiled material, convert the pile volume to equivalent acreage at the rate of 100 cubic feet equals 1 acre, and add this to the acreage of nonpiled material.

## **Alternatives to burning**

In this regulation, an alternative to burning refers to any method of removing or reducing fuels that replaces the use of fire. This includes mechanical, biological, or chemical treatments. Detailed information is provided in Appendix C ("Alternatives to Burning") of the Smoke Management Program's Guidance Document.

Alternatives to burning include:

- Composting - You can start a compost pile in your back yard. You can compost most organic material including leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds, fruit, vegetables, and some livestock manure (but not pig, cat or dog droppings). Finished compost will provide excellent garden nutrients.
- Mowing - Frequent mowing will keep weeds from growing up and creating a fire hazard. The cut material can often be left in place, crushed or incorporated into the soil. Mowing weeds, and then allowing them to dry before piling and burning them will greatly reduce the amount of smoke produced.

- Mechanical removal - Slash, brush and weeds can be chipped and used as mulch, and/or hauled to a disposal facility or biomass utilization facility. See if your local area has a chipper or a designated facility for disposal of yard waste and slash.

For a free composting brochure, and information on facilities that will take yard waste, slash, and cut trees for recycling, contact Greg Baker, NM Environment Department, 505-827-2780, or visit the web site of the New Mexico Organics Recycling Organization (<http://nmrecycle.org/nmoro.htm>).

### **Recommended minimum drying times**

Dry material burns hotter and produces less smoke and toxic air pollutants. If practicable, allow green material to dry after cutting for at least the following minimum times:

- Trees and branches over 6 inches in diameter — 90 days
- Trees and branches 2 to 6 inches in diameter — 45 days
- Brush, vines, bushes, prunings and small branches — 15 days
- Leaves, field crops and weeds — 7 dry days (no rain or snow)

### **Be a good neighbor!**

Although not required by the regulation, these are some extra things you can do to help your neighbors breathe more easily.

- Don't burn if the wind direction would cause smoke to blow towards your neighbors.
- Don't burn if the air is already smoky from other fires. Adding more smoke will just make the air pollution problems worse.
- Don't burn on very calm, cool days, when there is likely to be an atmospheric inversion that will trap smoke near the ground.
- Burn in the morning when winds are calm, so smoke will be blown away by higher afternoon winds.
- Burn only when the Ventilation Category is "GOOD" or better. Get the forecast Ventilation Category by calling the Air Quality Bureau hotline (1-800-224-7009), or from the National Weather Service web site (<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq/firewx/fw-3.htm>)