

Burn Ban FAQs

Q: What is a burn ban?

A: A burn ban is a legal restriction on outdoor burning. During dry weather conditions that pose fire danger, officials put them into effect to protect public safety and the environment.

Q: Who can legally put a burn ban into effect?

A: Local elected officials can legally enact burn bans. In Pennsylvania, bans are initiated at the request of the District Fire Warden or Forester. Upon their request, countywide fire department chiefs are surveyed. If more than 50% of fire chiefs recommend a ban be imposed, the local elected officials may enact a ban.

Q: Why are burn bans needed?

A: Burning restrictions are incredibly important to reduce the risk of wildfires that may spread to our communities, burning down homes, destroying personal property, and endangering the lives of citizens. The smoke from wildfires can also be a significant air pollutant, which has the potential to have significant short-and long term health effects.

Q: When do bans go into effect?

A: While a burning ban can come into effect during any season, it is most likely during wildfire season which varies by location.

Q: What happens if I violate a burn ban?

A: Violations of the burn ban can result in fines as defined in Ordinance 2003-01. Additionally, individuals who violate the burn ban may be liable for any damage caused by the fire, including the cost of the response to extinguish the fire

The ban can be enforced by any sworn police officer, including Pennsylvania State Police, Code Officer or Zoning Officer.

Q: Are all campfires banned?

A: No, but the only exceptions are campfires within a designated state, federal, or Department of Environmental Protection licensed campground in fire rings that contain the campfire.

Q: Are backyard fire pits banned?

A: Yes.

Q: Are fireworks prohibited during a burn ban?

A: Yes. The ban defines open burning as "the ignition and subsequent burning of any combustible material out-of-doors either in a burn barrel or on the ground" with an exception for commercial fireworks conducted by a licensed professional.

Q: Are there other campfire alternatives that are safe and legal during fire bans?

A: Yes, there are a few additional ideas you can consider. These include propane patio fireplaces or LED flame lights.

Q: Is smoking banned during a burn ban?

A: No, but you are urged to make sure that you always carefully put out your cigarette and dispose of it safely in a trash bin.

Q: Can gas grills be used during a burn ban?

A: Yes, gas grills and propane stoves are acceptable during the burn ban.

Q: Does the burn ban have an expiration date?

A: Yes, the ban is in effect for a specified time according to Resolution 2003-01 Code, Chapter 15 from being enacted. If significant rainfall occurs, the ban can be reconsidered.