

Facts on Trash Burning

- There is a state statute that allows municipalities to issue tickets to people that violate Vermont's trash burning law. (Title 24, Chapter 61, 24 V.S.A § 2201)
- The trash burning law has provisions for a penalty of up to \$500 and/or performing community roadside cleanup by the violator. If the penalty is not paid, violators will lose their driving license for ten days and their hunting and/or fishing licenses for a period of one year.
- Trash burning, including backyard burning, refers to the burning of household trash. Trash burning includes treated wood, plastics, newspapers, electronic products, garbage, cardboard, fabrics, tires, and the like — essentially any materials that would otherwise be recycled or sent to a landfill.
- Burning household trash is illegal in Vermont. Untreated wood and other yard waste may be burned legally with a permit; however, some towns have banned all burning.
- Trash today is not the same as it was years ago. Today's trash contains plastics, metals and other synthetic materials. When burned in a burn barrel, woodstove, fireplace, or open fire these items emit toxic fumes and harmful quantities of dioxins, a group of highly toxic chemicals known to cause cancer, asthma and other illnesses.
- Emissions from backyard burning of household trash can increase the risk of heart disease; aggravate respiratory ailments such as asthma; cause rashes, nausea, or headaches, and developmental or reproductive disorders. Over time, exposure to these toxic chemicals can lead to chronic diseases such as emphysema and cancer
- Toxins and other pollutants from trash burning affect everyone's health and property. The toxins released into the air can enter your body through your eyes, protective mucous in your nose, or through blood vessels in your lungs.
- Trash burning occurs at low temperatures in burn barrels, homemade burn boxes, wood stoves, outdoor boilers, or open pits and lacks pollution controls. Large modern incinerators burn at over 1800 degrees and add enough oxygen for complete combustion. These very hot fires destroy some of the dangerous chemicals otherwise produced by backyard burning. Sophisticated pollution control devices capture other toxins or pollutants.
- One half of the health risks associated with trash burning are a direct result of smoke inhalation. The other half occur when toxic particles are deposited in water, soils, crops and gardens and then ingested.
- Children are especially at risk because their immune systems are not fully developed. A child breathing the same polluted air as an adult will absorb up to six times more of the combustion products per body weight.



- In rural Vermont, the burning of household trash has been estimated at 14,000 tons a year.
- There are low cost and convenient alternatives to burning trash. Residents can “precycle” by choosing products with minimal packaging, buy reusable items, compost yard and food waste, recycle, give items to local charities or salvage companies, and properly dispose of the remainder.
- For more information on trash burning in Vermont, please visit <http://www.dontburnvt.org> or call the Air Pollution Control Division toll free at (888) 520-4879.
- Additional information about recycling is available at <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/dec/wmd.htm>.

