

Your Forest
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Helena National Forest Public Affairs
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Public Information

LEARN BEFORE YOU BURN

Fire may be far from anyone's mind given the snowfall from last week's snow storm. However, open-burning season in the Lewis and Clark and Jefferson Counties began March 1 and goes through November 30. Generally open burning is not advised during the legal fire season from May 1 through September 30. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the Helena National Forest, and the counties in the area want to remind local residents that **you need a permit to do any open burning**. This includes burning logging slash as well as back yard burning. Permits are needed so that dispatchers and other fire officials know that your smoke is a controlled burn and not a wildfire. However, the permit is just a piece of paper until you make a phone call!

In **Jefferson County**, these permits are available at the Sheriff's office in Boulder, at the Montana City Store, at Marks-Miller Post and Pole, at the Whitehall Ranger District office, at the Town Hall in Whitehall, at the home of Gail Giono in Whitehall, and at the home of Joe Sologub in Elk Park. The permits are free and are valid for the entire burning season. To activate the permit, **you must call the Sheriff's office each day you burn at 225-4075**. The dispatcher will then give you a number for that day indicating that your permit is activated for the day's burning at the location given.

In southern **Lewis and Clark County**, permits can be obtained by calling the Helena Forest Headquarters at 449-5201, ext 0. The Forest Service will prepare your permit and mail it to you or you can pick it up at the Forest Headquarters located across from the airport terminal in Helena. You must **call 447-8293** (this number is on the permit itself) **to activate the permit on the day of the burn**. Permits in the **Lincoln Valley** are obtained from the Lincoln Ranger District or the DNRC Field Office.

In **Broadwater County**, permits can be obtained by calling the Sheriff's office at 266-3441. Call the Sheriff's office at 547-3397 in **Meagher County** for a burning permit. In **Cascade County**, permits must be obtained in person at the Law Enforcement Center/Regional Detention Center in Great Falls. All of these Counties also have activation requirements on the day of the burn.

During September, October, and November, air quality concerns may preclude open burning. If you plan to burn during these months, you must contact the ventilation hotline operated by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) at 1-800-225-6779. State law prevents any open burning in December, January, and February. Some exceptions are possible by calling David Aguirre at DEQ (444-5287).

Before you call on the day of the burn, know the legal description of the burn area and your contact information in case a protection agency needs to contact you.

The snow pack has melted early due to warm temperatures and drought conditions persist, DNRC and the Helena National Forest caution residents to be extremely careful when attempting to burn. **Debris burning that gets away from someone causes approximately 45% of all fires in Montana and you are financially responsible for the suppression of the fire that gets away.**

WHEN BURNING, USE THESE PRECAUTIONS:

- Have a sufficient supply of **water, hand tools and help** to control your fire.
- **Clear** an area ten feet around the material to be burned.
- Keep the fire a **manageable size**.
- **Attend to your fire** until it is **completely extinguished**. If it gets away it could cost you the farm.
- **Do not burn during high winds**. The best time to burn is in the morning when fuels are still damp and it is not too hot or windy. Pay attention to the weather forecast.
- **Use common sense and exercise extreme caution when burning!**
- If there is something about this permit requirement you don't understand, **learn before you burn**. You can contact your local fire department, local Ranger District, or any of the Sheriff's offices for educational materials and/or information.

IF YOU HAVE A FIRE EMERGENCY CALL 9-1-1 FOR HELP!



WANT TO BURN?
PLAN AHEAD
GET A PERMIT
CALL TO ACTIVATE THE PERMIT
TAKE PRECAUTIONS