

MICHIGAN



# Agricultural Burning Guidelines

**Michigan State University Extension &  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources**

(This document reflects changes in the Michigan burning regulations enacted 4/19/12)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources estimates that there are between 8,000 and 10,000 wildland fires each year in Michigan. Of these, 98 percent are started by human activities. Wildfire occurs nearly everywhere in Michigan, and can result in catastrophic losses. Farm management frequently includes fire use for disease control, crop propagation, debris removal etc. This fact sheet has been developed to help agricultural producers understand the legal aspects of burning, and recommendations under Michigan law.

## **Michigan Fire Laws**

- Prohibit burning without a permit anytime the ground is not covered by snow.
- Allow for a “domestic” fire (such as a campfire, cooking/warming fire, or approved burn barrel) without the need for a permit.
- No permit is necessary for a burn barrel fire; however barrels must have a proper fitting screen or lid, holes no larger than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in size, and rest on non flammable material extending 3ft on all sides. Burning of farm or household waste that contains plastic, rubber, foam, chemically treated wood, textiles, electronics, chemicals, or hazardous materials is prohibited. (If in doubt of the materials content, do not burn it).
- Prohibit the open burning of non-vegetative material such as building materials, furniture, trash, treated or untreated lumber, plastics, etc.
- Allow local ordinances to be stricter than state law.
- Allow certain exemptions for agricultural burning – *specific practices only*.
- State that the person responsible for starting a fire is responsible for monitoring and managing the fire, as well as damages and suppression costs should it escape.
- State that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is responsible for enforcing the forest fire law.

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## Agricultural Burning

### A Permit IS Needed for Agricultural Burning:

- If you are burning a road shoulder.
- If you are clearing land that has not been cropped in the previous year.
- If you are clearing or burning a garden spot that is not considered part of the farm cropping operation.
- If you are burning a pile of yard/tree clippings or other vegetative debris that is not part of the active cropping operation.
- If you are burning Christmas trees that were left over from the previous year.

### Exemptions for Agricultural Burning:

- If the fire is part of the cropping or approved disease/pest control system (please check with the MDNR to see if you meet exemption criteria). Exemptions do not include clearing land, burning road shoulders, burning fertilizer bags, chemicals, tires, etc.)
- If you are having a campfire or burning in an approved container.
- If the ground is snow covered.
- **Note:** You are strongly encouraged to notify your local fire department or dispatch center even when the above practices are followed. You are still responsible for monitoring and managing any fire you start.

### For More Information or To Get A Burning Permit:

- If applicable, contact your local fire department or township office to obtain a burning permit and/or go to [www.michigan.gov/burnpermit](http://www.michigan.gov/burnpermit) or phone 866-922-2876.
- Check with your local fire department or MDNR office for more information on Michigan burning laws.
- To protect your home and farm from wildfire, check with your area MDNR office or MSU Extension office for “Firewise” information.
- Websites:

MSU Extension: [www.firewise.msu.edu](http://www.firewise.msu.edu)

Michigan Department of Natural Resources: [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)



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