

## 308 Outdoor Burning

### Purpose

This guideline is designed to outline the roles, responsibilities, and recommended actions of East County Fire & Rescue personnel when responding to open burning complaints, inquiries, and dispatches.

### General

1. Outdoor burning in Clark County is regulated by the Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA). SWCAA, not the Fire Department, is responsible for enforcement of the burning regulations in our area.
2. ECFR is a source of public information regarding outdoor burning and a place to obtain SWCAA burning permits. ECFR is an emergency response organization. We are not the 'outdoor burn police'.
3. Enforcing the burning regulations is a 'lose-lose' scenario for the Fire Department. Burning regulations (outside of hazard mitigation) are not within our scope of authority. Burning complaints often revolve around neighborhood disputes that we need not be a part of.
4. Fire Department intervention can subject our personnel to undue risks with angry and/or violent citizens.

### Inquiries About Open Burning

ECFR personnel are often approached by citizens with questions regarding open burning. These questions usually relate to who can burn, and when and where open burning can take place.

1. First determine if the proposed burning is in an area that is open to outdoor burning. Reference the maps at Station 9-1 or 1-1.
  - a. If they are in a closed area then no outdoor burning is allowed.
  - b. If they are in an open area then they can conduct outdoor burning of *natural vegetation* with a permit. Permits are available at the Fire Stations.
    - i. The permits allow a pile no larger than 10'x10'x6'.
    - ii. Permits for larger piles must be obtained from the County Fire Marshal.
    - iii. Advise the citizen to burn as per the rules on the permit and to always call the phone number on the permit before lighting the pile.
2. Recreational fires are allowed in the no burning areas. These fires may be no larger than 3'x3'x2'.

## Burning Complaints

ECFR personnel are often approached or called by citizens with complaints about outdoor burning that is occurring or has occurred in our area.

1. Ask for the fire's location and try to determine if the fire is a hazard.
  - a. Ask if there are any structures or hazards close to the fire.
  - b. Determine why the call is being made (afraid of fire spread, area closed to burning?).
  - c. Determine if the weather conditions are such that would make burning a hazard?
  - d. Has burning been closed due to fire danger or air pollution levels?
2. If the complainant can relate no hazard and wants to merely report an illegal burn:
  - a. Direct them to SWCAA (360-574-3058). They have the authority to enforce the burning regulations.
  - b. Advise them that ECFR will respond to hazard fires only.
3. If the complainant reports a real hazard then a Fire Investigation response is necessary.
  - a. Advise Dispatch of your circumstances and respond Code 1.
  - b. Upon arrival, determine if there is indeed a hazard.
    - i. If there is a clear and present hazard: extinguish the fire or have the property owner do so.
    - ii. In the case of blatant disregard for burning regulations: (e.g. burning large trash piles, structures, RV's) the County Fire Marshal shall be contacted. Advise him/her of the situation and take action according to his/her direction.
    - iii. If there is no hazard but the fire is in the no burn area: advise dispatch to notify SWAA.
    - iv. If there is no hazard and the fire is in an open burn area: no Fire District intervention is warranted. Do not initiate contact.

NOTE: Fire Departments have no right or authority to extinguish a person's fire or tell them to extinguish a fire if there is no hazard; *even in a no burn area.*

## Response to Fire Investigations

1. Dispatch normally will not tap out Fire unless there is a reported hazard or they were unable to rule out the possibility of a hazard.
2. Use the same guidelines as 3(b) under **Burning Complaints** when dispatched to a Fire Investigation.
3. Generate an incident number and report anytime you respond to a Fire Investigation by citizen complaint or dispatch and document all actions taken.