

"Burning Household Waste: New Rule Reduces Air Toxics"

Do you know the dangers from burning household waste near your home? Today's trash contains plastics, metals, and synthetic materials that create dangerous chemicals when burned. These chemicals include dioxins, benzene, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), and other compounds that are known to cause respiratory ailments, stress human immune systems, and are potentially carcinogenic.

Smoke and toxic emissions from burning residential waste stay close to the ground, potentially affecting the health of your family and neighbors. Children are generally more susceptible than adults to adverse health impacts from these air toxics. The toxics can be inhaled from the air, or eaten when the fine particles deposit on plants, soil and water and get into our food sources. Ultimately, these chemicals accumulate in our bodies.



We can reduce or eliminate these risks by no longer burning trash in or around our homes. Throughout California, many local governments have already restricted the types of materials that can be burned. However, even with these limitations it is estimated that over 700,000 households are currently allowed to burn all or some of their household waste. To provide more consistent public health protection, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) approved a statewide rule, called the **Airborne Toxic Control Measure (ATCM) to Reduce Emissions of Toxic Air Contaminants from Outdoor Residential Waste Burning**. The rule minimizes dangerous emissions by prohibiting the burning of household wastes other than natural vegetation and banning burn barrels and backyard incinerators beginning January 1, 2004.

During 2003, local air districts may designate limited exemptions in very sparsely populated areas, where community health risk from burning non-vegetative material can be minimized. In these exemption areas, residents may still be allowed to use burn barrels and/or to burn paper and cardboard. Paper and cardboard do not produce as many dioxins as other waste, but burning them will produce some dangerous chemicals. Contact your local air district for more specific information about your local area.

What should you do? Remember the principle: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Doing these things will reduce the amount of rubbish created and minimize the amount you will need to dispose. Check the websites below for information and alternatives and contact your local waste management agency or department of public works to see what recycling and waste collection services are offered in your area. Although you may need to contract for waste collection services or haul your waste to a local transfer station or landfill, by using the reduce, reuse, recycle principle you will reduce the cost of these options. In more remote areas, get together with neighbors to establish small community dumpsters to reduce hauling trips, distances, and costs. Combine trips to the recycling center or disposal facility with other errands. Even if you are still allowed

to burn vegetation, consider mulching, chipping, or shredding it for compost or landscaping purposes instead. Smoke created from vegetation creates unhealthful emissions, too.

This new rule restricting residential waste burning was established to protect your health and that of your family and community. If you observe illegal burning of waste, report it to your local air district. It is a crime that impacts you and your environment. And simply dumping waste on your land, or somewhere else, is illegal, unsightly, and a public health hazard. Report illegal dumping to local enforcement authorities, even if you do not know who dumped the waste. Local county, state, and federal air quality offices, fire protection, waste management, and public health officials will be working together to advise communities about responsible disposal of household waste and ways to reduce and eliminate illegal dumping and burning of household waste.

For detailed information, go to the following websites on the internet:

- Statewide residential burning rule: www.arb.ca.gov/smp/resburn/resburn.htm
- Waste Disposal Options: www.ciwmb.ca.gov/ or www.earth911.org/master.asp
- Can/Bottle Recycling Centers: <http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DOR/index.htm>
- Local Air District: <http://www.capcoa.org/Districts.htm>