

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**PA TOOLS YOU CAN USE**

**Backyard Burning Web Site**

[www.epa.gov/msw/backyard](http://www.epa.gov/msw/backyard)  
 provides facts and information; links to tribal, state, local, and other backyard burning Web sites; and brochures that can be customized and reproduced by tribes and Alaskan Native villages to discourage residents from burning household waste.

**Waste Management in Indian Country**

[www.epa.gov/tribalmsw](http://www.epa.gov/tribalmsw)  
 provides solid and hazardous waste management success stories of tribes and Alaskan Native villages; examples of tribal codes, ordinances, and solid waste management plans; and EPA grant information.

**Dioxin Web Site**

[www.epa.gov/ncea/dioxin.htm](http://www.epa.gov/ncea/dioxin.htm)  
 provides in-depth information on the Dioxin reassessment report, the Dioxin Exposure Initiative, EPA analytical methods, EPA regulations, and answers to frequently asked questions about dioxin.

**Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Call Center**

**800 424-9346 or 703 412-9810 in the Washington, D.C. area**

**TDD: 800 553-7672 or 703 412-3323**

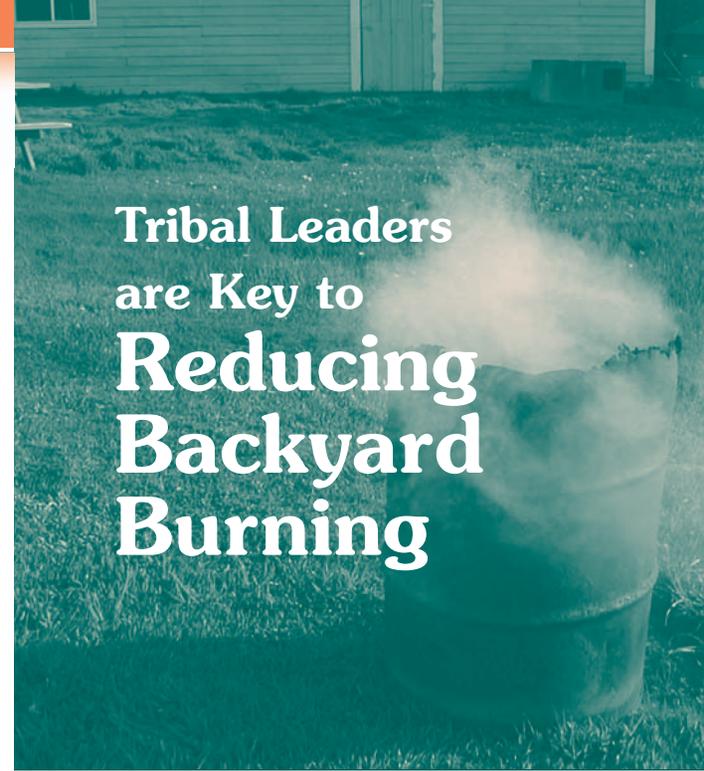
Additional brochures and more information on backyard burning can be obtained by calling this toll-free number.

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**Tribal Leaders  
 are Key to  
 Reducing  
 Backyard  
 Burning**



**B**urning of household waste is a long-standing practice in many rural areas, including Indian country and Alaskan Native villages. New research, however, shows that it is a major source of toxic emissions that damage both human health and the environment.



## BACKYARD BURNING IS A HEALTH HAZARD

The smoke from backyard burning is more than just an irritating nuisance. It also contains many harmful pollutants, including particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, lead, mercury, and hexachlorobenzene. These pollutants can cause immediate and long-term damage to the lungs, nervous system, kidneys, and liver. Children, the elderly, and those with preexisting respiratory conditions are often affected the most.

Some of the most toxic chemicals produced by open burning of household waste are dioxins. Dioxins are a group of long-lasting organic compounds that form when products containing carbon and small amounts of chlorine are burned. Dioxins are

toxic at extremely low levels and are linked to several health problems, including cancer and developmental and reproductive disorders. Backyard burning of household waste is one of the largest known sources of dioxins in the country.

Dioxins accumulate in the food chain. Airborne dioxins can settle onto feed crops, which are then eaten by domestic meat and dairy animals. These dioxins accumulate in the fats of animals, and then in humans when we consume meat, fish, and dairy products.

Ash from backyard burning also is likely to contain toxic pollutants, such as mercury, lead, chromium, and arsenic, which can contaminate vegetables if scattered in gardens. Children can accidentally swallow contaminated dirt on their hands while playing near discarded ash.

## TRIBES ARE TAKING ACTION TO REDUCE BACKYARD BURNING

Tribes and Alaskan Native villages face several challenges in reducing burning. One of the biggest hurdles is developing convenient, affordable waste disposal alternatives for tribal members. Changing people's attitudes and practices can be equally challenging. The practice of burning waste can be difficult to change.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

**Providing and promoting safer waste management alternatives** is essential to reducing backyard burning.

- The Jicarilla Apache Nation in New Mexico provides free residential waste collection service to all tribal members.
- The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas will pick up tribal members' waste for free if they are unable to bring it to the tribal transfer station themselves.
- The Tule River Indian Tribe in California provides free use of its transfer station.

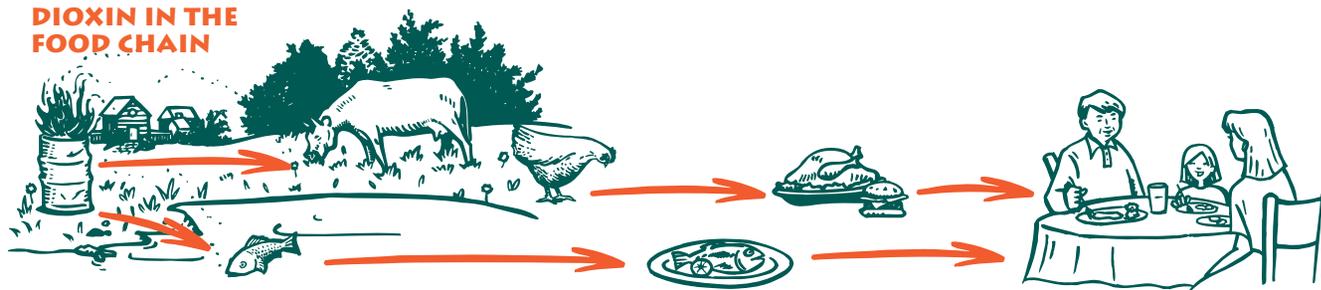
**Educating community members** about the associated health and environmental dangers of backyard burning is another important step.

- The Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians in Wisconsin distributed a brochure explaining the health and environmental impacts of backyard burning.
- Other tribes have included reminders in utility bills and posted notices at tribal offices and clinics.
- Many tribes work with tribal schools, youth groups, and community centers.

**Developing and enforcing anti-burning codes and ordinances** is another crucial piece of changing practices and increasing awareness.

- The St. Regis Mohawk's (New York) Tribal Burn Regulation ([www.srmtenv.org/burnrgs.pdf](http://www.srmtenv.org/burnrgs.pdf)) bans the burning of solid and hazardous waste and works with violators to stop burning, imposing fines only as a last resort.

### DIOXIN IN THE FOOD CHAIN



## TRIBES CAN REDUCE WASTE AND PROMOTE ALTERNATIVES

- **Reduce, reuse, and recycle!** — Numerous tribes offer free recycling to members to help reduce backyard burning. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Idaho and Nevada even pay residents for aluminum cans brought to the transfer station for recycling. Others, such as the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indians in Oregon, use newsletters to promote reuse.
- **Donate or swap used items** — The Oneida Nation in Wisconsin sponsors a swap meet to promote reuse. Tribal members bring their used items to a tribal community building at the beginning of the week. At the end of the week, leftover items are circulated to the other tribes in the region for swap events. Any remaining items are either sold to a company that distributes the items to local charities or recycled.
- **Burn barrel exchange programs** — Some tribes offer incentives to tribal members to exchange their burn barrels for discounts on alternative disposal services. The Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians' (Wisconsin) burn barrel buy back program exchanged burn barrels for \$20 worth of officially stamped trash bags for use at the tribe's transfer station.