

Introduction to the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation

If you are planning to open burn vegetative debris in the Province of B.C., you must meet the requirements of the [Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation \(OBSCR\)](#). OBSCR is designed to minimize the amount of smoke released from open burning, especially in areas near people.

Depending on the type of burning you will be carrying out, there is a factsheet that you can use to help you understand the OBSCR. The factsheets provide information on where you can burn in relation to neighbours, businesses and hospitals, when you can burn, and for how long your burn can last.

1. Open burning in a [High Smoke Sensitivity Zone](#)
2. Open burning in a [Low or Medium Sensitivity Zone](#)
3. Open burning [Diseased Vegetative Debris](#)
4. Open burning for [Community Wildfire Risk Reduction](#)
5. Burning in an [Air Curtain Incinerator](#)

You may also refer to the [complete regulation](#) available online. If you have further questions, contact us at obscr@gov.bc.ca.

How to find your Smoke Sensitivity Zone

The province has been broken into zones that are based on where the most people live. In areas in and around communities the impact on people from smoke could be high. This zone is called the High Smoke Sensitivity Zone and burning requirements are most strict in this zone. Moderately populated areas and areas along highway corridors are in the Medium Smoke Sensitivity Zone and the remainder of the Province is in Low Smoke Sensitivity Zone. The Low Smoke Sensitivity Zone has fewer requirements for burning because it covers areas that are distant from communities.

Visit the [Smoke Sensitivity Zone](#) website for maps of the zones or locate yourself on the [interactive mapping tool](#). The rules you need to follow are different depending on what zone you are in.

Understanding the Ventilation Index

Before you burn, you must check the ventilation index which changes daily based on location in the province and atmospheric conditions.

The ventilation index is a forecast released daily by Environment and Climate Change Canada. It provides an estimate of how well the atmosphere will disperse smoke on any given day. It is

Information for all burners

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similar to a weather forecast, except it provides information on how well smoke will mix into the air. It uses the mixing height of the atmosphere, or how high smoke will rise upward, as well as wind speed to predict ventilation. With a higher mixing height and sufficient wind speeds, smoke should disperse and not impact neighbours. The forecast is broken down into GOOD, FAIR and POOR ventilation. To start a burn in most populated areas of the Province a ventilation index of GOOD is required.

Often in the winter there are long periods of time where the ventilation index is POOR. During these times please be patient and check conditions daily - there will be a GOOD day again. More favorable ventilation is often seen in the fall and spring or 'shoulder' seasons of burning.

For more information on the ventilation index see the [B.C. Ventilation Index Forecast](#) website or call the automated toll free ventilation index phone number 1-888-281-2992.

What can you burn?

The OBSCR applies to the combustion of vegetative debris using an open fire.

- Vegetative debris is defined as disturbed or undisturbed vegetative material targeted for disposal and includes all types of vegetation.

OBSCR does not apply to:

- Fires for training purposes under the *Fire Services Act*.
- Resource management open fires or fire control (S.9) under the *Wildfire Act*.
- Burning of leaves, foliage, weeds, crops or stubble for domestic or agricultural purposes in compliance with the *Weed Control Act*.
- Campfires are exempt from OBSCR.

Vegetation size exemptions for agricultural or domestic purposes

- If all your vegetative debris is **under 3 cm in diameter** you are exempt from the OBSCR.
- If all your vegetative debris is **between 3 cm and 10 cm in diameter** you can burn if you have collected all your debris from within 5 km of your burn site and there are no burn bans in place.

If these size categories apply to you, please consult with your local government to see if there are any other burn restrictions you need to follow before burning.



More Information

For additional information see the Ministry's [Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation](#) webpage or send your inquiry to: OBSCR@gov.bc.ca

Prohibited materials

No matter what size your vegetative debris is, it is extremely important to make sure that none of the following prohibited materials are burnt. It is illegal to burn these materials.

Prohibited Materials		
Animal carcasses and slaughter waste	Domestic waste	Plastics
Asphalt products	Electrical wire	Polystyrene foam
Batteries	Fuel and lubricant containers	Railway ties
Biomedical waste	Fiberglass	Rubber
Carpets	Furniture and appliances	Tar paper
Construction waste	Hazardous waste	Tires
Demolition waste	Manure	Treated or painted wood products
Drywall	Paint and varnish	Used oil

During periods of poor air quality, the Director may prohibit all burning. Please check [air quality advisories](#) before burning.

Persons preparing for or conducting an open burn should review and comply with the legal provisions set out in the [Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation](#). This Factsheet provides summary information only.

More Information

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