



FAQ's on Maine's open burning laws March 7, 2024

Can you define a “recreational” campfire?

A recreational campfire is an outdoor fire that is used for cooking, personal warmth, light, ceremonial, or aesthetic purposes and that is not a part of debris disposal (AKA burning brush).

It is unlawful to have a recreational campfire on the land of another without the landowner's permission. Many Maine landowners designate campsite areas for public use, these sites give the public permission to have campfires on their land when not under an active fire restrictions and with the proper permits as needed.

Do I need a burn permit for a bonfire or other type of large recreational fire (not a brush pile fire)?

As of Oct 25, 2023, all recreational fires with flame lengths greater than 3 feet high and 3 feet in diameter require burn permits.

What if I have a concrete or steel fire pit, is a burn permit still needed?

Properly built fire pits are good for preventing escaped fires, but Maine's open burning laws still require a burn permit for recreational fires with flame lengths greater than 3 feet high and 3 feet in diameter. We recommend checking with the local fire department or town office, as some municipalities have local ordinances that require seasonal campfire permits for backyard campfires.

Open burning laws prohibit outdoor burning during a Red Flag Warning. What does this mean?

Red Flag Warnings are issued in collaboration with the Maine Forest Service and the National Weather Service during periods of high wildfire potential. When Red Flag Warnings occur, they shut down a specific geographical area for a stated period of time. Example: “The National Weather Service has issued a Red Flag Warning for Cumberland and York County today from 11 am to 7 pm, due to high temperatures, gusty winds, and low relative humidity. These factors produce an increased risk of fire danger.” It is unlawful to burn out of doors in an area that is under a Red Flag Warning.

Do Maine's open burning laws apply to outdoor grills used for cooking?

It depends on the type of fuel that is being used for cooking and whether you live in an organized or unorganized territory. The use of charcoal grills and solid fuels have always required recreational campfire permits when kindling a fire on land of another or within Maine's unorganized territories. Wood fired or charcoal grills can't be used in Maine's unorganized territories or on property you don't own, if the area is under Red Flag Warnings.

We have a round, metal, smokeless fire pit in our backyard that we use for cooking and recreation. We only put a few pieces of firewood in it at a time. Do we need a burn permit to use it?

State law requires a burn permit for fires that have a flame length greater than 3 feet high and 3 feet in diameter. This type of fire pit would be restricted during a Red Flag Warning. We recommend checking with the local fire department or town office, as some municipalities have local ordinances that require seasonal campfire permits for backyard campfires.

What about having a small campfire at a campground during a Red Flag Warning? Is that allowed?

If the campground is licensed and has an approved fire safety plan in place prior to the Red Flag Warning, small recreational campfires are allowed.

Due to weather limitations, opportunities to successfully burn blueberry fields in Maine can be rare. Is it possible to get an exemption and burn during a Red Flag Warning?

It is possible in organized towns to get a burn permit during a Red Flag Warning for a blueberry burn. However, a Town Fire Warden will have to issue the burn permit in person. Prior to burning, a burn plan approved by the Town Fire Warden must be in place. Please contact the Maine Forest Service if you need a template for the burn plan.

The Maine Forest Service, which is responsible for issuing burn permits in the Unorganized Territories, will not issue burn permits on a Red Flag Warning.

For more information on Maine’s open burning laws, scan here:



For information on Maine’s Out of State Firewood Ban, scan here:

