

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

**Environmental Protection Division • Air Protection Branch**

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Open Burning Ban Begins May 1, 2015 for 54 Counties**

(ATLANTA – April 21, 2015) – Beginning May 1 and ending September 30, EPD's open burning ban will be in effect for 54 Georgia counties. The open burning ban has been in effect for the current areas since 2005.

The open burning ban prohibits citizens and businesses from burning yard and land-clearing debris during the months of May through September. This restriction is in addition to a ban on burning household garbage that exists year-round throughout all of Georgia.

Citizens are reminded that these rules are in place for a reason – and the reason is health. Smoke from fires contains chemicals and pollutants that may negatively impact a person's health. Burning yard waste releases nitrogen oxides and particle pollution into the air. Both pollutants can contribute to lung and heart disease.

Ground-level ozone is most commonly produced in the heat of the summer when nitrogen oxides combine with fumes from fuels, paints and vegetation. Ground-level ozone can cause inflammation to the lungs as well as other health problems. Particle pollution is made up of extremely small particles that can increase the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Burning household garbage, banned year-round in Georgia, releases even more dangerous pollution.

May through September is a time of year when people, particularly children, are more likely to be outdoors. It is also the time of year when ground - level ozone and particle pollution levels are generally higher.

In December 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized an update to the national air quality standards for fine particle pollution (PM2.5), lowering the annual health standard to a more stringent 12 micrograms per cubic meter, down from 15 micrograms per cubic meter.

With this lower standard, and because particle pollution values are typically highest in the summer, the positive effects of the summer burn ban become more significant.

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Even with a more protective standard, monitoring data shows that the air quality in Georgia is improving. "This is very good news for Georgia," says Keith Bentley, Georgia EPD Air Protection Branch Chief. "This success is confirmation that the clean air strategies we have in place in Georgia, including the open burning ban, are working."

Some actions such as campfires and agricultural activities are exempt.

Citizens can access more information on the open burning ban by visiting [www.georgiaair.org](http://www.georgiaair.org) and clicking on the open burning rules graphic, or by calling the EPD District Office in their area (phone numbers listed below). Small businesses can obtain help and information by calling EPD's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program toll-free at 1-877-427-6255.

Counties included in the ban and the appropriate EPD District Office phone numbers follow:

**Mountain District Office (Atlanta): 404-362-2671** Carroll, Clayton, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Heard, Henry, Rockdale, Spalding counties

**Northeast District Office (Athens): 706-369-6376** Banks, Barrow, Butts, Clarke, Hall, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Putnam, Walton counties

**East Central District Office (Augusta): 706-667-4343** Columbia, Richmond counties

**West Central District Office (Macon): 478-751-6612** Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Lamar, Monroe, Peach, Pike, Twiggs, Upson, Meriwether, Troup counties

**Mountain District Office (Cartersville): 770-387-4900** Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Dawson, Floyd, Forsyth, Gordon, Haralson, Lumpkin, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker counties

For more information about alternatives to burning such as composting and chipping, please visit [www.georgiaair.org](http://www.georgiaair.org), click on the open burning rules graphic and select "Alternatives to Burning" at the bottom of the page. You may also access a map of Georgia composting operations at <http://epd.georgia.gov/composting-operations-georgia>.

Debris can also be hauled to a commercial processing/grinding/composting operation or to an inert or construction and demolition landfill. For a list of landfills in your area, please call EPD's Solid Waste Management Program at 404-362-2692, and/or visit the Land Protection Branch website for more details: <http://epd.georgia.gov/land-protection-branch>.

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