



Open Burning



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
City of St. Joseph
Health Department

Twice a year, during the months of April and November, open burning of dry yard waste is allowed within the city limits.

Here is a short summary of the laws regulating open burning:

1. Fires are allowed only between 8am and 6pm.
2. All fires must be in an upright container with a volume equal to no more than 55 gallons (if you can visualize a 55-gallon drum, you've got a good idea of what the limit is). A drum-size container of wire mesh (chicken wire or something similar) is permissible.
3. No fire can be within 15 feet of any building.
4. Only one burn container per residence is allowed.
5. All fires shall be monitored from a point close to where the fire is located by a person capable of containing a fire, should that be necessary.
6. Yard waste (leaves, brush, logs) only; no trash, paper, lumber or building debris may be burned.
7. Firefighting material including a garden hose or a container of water sufficient to contain any fire started must be at the site of the fire.

SPECIAL NOTE: Fire Department response to “open burning” calls will be non- emergency (no lights and siren) unless the fire involves or is threatening a structure.

Any violation of the open burning restrictions may result in a summons to appear in court for a misdemeanor violation.

If weather conditions, such as high winds, indicate the safety of the community or the public may be endangered or if open burning may create a health hazard, the Fire Chief or Health Director may invoke a temporary burning ban.

Residents are encouraged to explore alternatives to open burning. Many options for disposing of yard waste are easy, do not contribute to air pollution, are not dependent on time restrictions or the weather, and provide the healthy benefit of physical activity while doing yard work instead of breathing acrid smoke from a waste fire. Such activities include mowing leaves into fine particles and leaving them lay to fertilize the lawn, or incorporating leaves into a mulch container to decompose into humus for use in vegetable and flower gardens or for use on lawns as a soil amendment. Larger wood brush that can be chipped makes excellent mulch around trees and shrubs. Family and friends with gardens may want additional yard waste to use as mulch.

If you choose to burn, please do so within the days provided, as open burning session will not be extended due to weather blackout dates.