



Burning Your Household Trash Does Not Make it Go Away

(Grand Traverse County, Michigan, May 2019) – It's spring cleaning time and for many that means gathering up all the unwanted items in the house, garage and garden. The temptation to throw it into a pile, barrel, or even an outdoor boiler may be strong. But wait! Don't light that match!

Backyard burning of household trash releases toxins into the air. The harmful dioxins and furans that are produced in the burning process don't simply go up in smoke. They settle on plants and waterways and are in the ash that is produced. From the air, the toxins and ash can find their way into the dirt of your vegetable garden and into the food that you eat. Kids playing in the area may be exposed to them as well. They can cause serious health concerns such as rashes, nausea, dizziness and headaches, burning or itching eyes and nose, coughing, aggravation of respiratory ailments, and an increase of heart disease.

The longer a fire burns and smolders more toxins are produced. According to the New York State Department of Health burning 10 pounds of household trash may produce as much air pollution as a modern, well-controlled incinerator burning 400,000 pounds of trash. And there is always a risk of the burn pile getting out of control and creating a damaging, accidental fire.

Not only is backyard burning harmful to your health and the environment, it is also against the law. Public Act 102 of 2012 prohibits trash burning of household waste that contains plastic, rubber, foam, chemically treated wood, textiles, electronics, chemicals, hazardous materials.

Since 2006, 1,235 forest fires were the result of debris burning. According to the Michigan DNR Forest Resources Division, this is 30% of the 4,130 fires they responded to from 2006 to present.

Don't light that match! Reduce, reuse, recycle, compost, and then dispose the rest with a commercial waste hauler or your local transfer station.

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