

# ***SKEENA REGION GUIDE TO THE OPEN BURNING SMOKE CONTROL REGULATION***

## ***Why Regulate Open Burning and Smoke?***

In 1993 the Provincial Health Officer noted health impacts from particulate matter are greater than those from any other air pollutant. Fine particles, which are the main constituents of smoke, remain suspended in the air where they may be inhaled and deposited deep in the respiratory system. This is linked to emergency room visits for asthma, hospitalisations, impaired lung function, increased absenteeism from work and school, and death from cardiopulmonary disease. Children, the elderly, asthmatics, and others suffering from respiratory disorders are especially vulnerable to smoke-related air pollution. Open burning can affect air quality on scales from your neighbourhood to entire valleys and beyond.

### ***Before You Burn***

- ➔ Make sure you comply with the Open Burning Requirements.
- ➔ Call the Air Quality Information Line at **1-888-281-2992** to ensure burning restrictions (requiring a permit) are not in effect.
- ➔ Make sure the weather is good for smoke dispersion. Check under “**Contacts**” section for how to get ventilation conditions.

## ***Open Burning Requirements***

After province-wide consultation, the BC government proclaimed the *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation* in 1993. It applies to fires for purposes such as land clearing, silviculture, forestry, wildlife habitat enhancement, and domestic range improvement. The intent of the regulation is to reduce smoke emissions and impacts without requiring an Air Emission Permit from the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP).

An Air Emission Permit is **not required** for open burning of debris on a parcel of land, provided **all** of the following conditions are met:

- ✓ there are no open burning restrictions in effect (see Burning Restrictions section);
- ✓ favourable weather exists for smoke dispersion (see Required Atmospheric Conditions section);
- ✓ prohibited and/or noxious materials are not burned (see Prohibited Materials section);
- ✓ debris is burned on land it originated from;
- ✓ all other reasonable options (reduce, re-use, and recycle) have been pursued before burning;
- ✓ open burning is conducted greater than 100 metres from neighbouring residences and businesses and greater than 500 metres from schools, hospitals, and continuing care facilities;
- ✓ smoke emissions will not pose a visibility hazard to airports or highways;
- ✓ the burn complies with any applicable municipal, regional district, or improvement district bylaw that is more restrictive than the regulation;
- ✓ open burning is conducted in accordance with the *Forest Practices Code of BC*;
- ✓ for cities, towns, and villages:
  - the smoke release period must not exceed 72 consecutive hours
  - no open burning has occurred on the parcel of land at any time during the preceding 15 days
  - smoke may be released during open burning on a parcel of land no more than 4 separate occasions during a calendar year
- ✓ for areas other than cities, towns, and villages:
  - the smoke release period must not exceed 96 consecutive hours

## ***Required Atmospheric Conditions***

Where there's fire, there's smoke. Playing your part in smoke management is crucial to maintaining clean air and a healthy environment. Burning when atmospheric conditions are favourable to dispersion will prevent smoke impacts. Atmospheric stability, mixing height, and winds all affect how smoke is dispersed. The *ventilation index* measures the ability of the atmosphere to disperse smoke emissions. Environment Canada forecasts Ventilation Indices as part of their Burns Lake, Smithers, Terrace, and Stewart Smoke Control Forecasts. Refer to the Skeena

Region Ventilation Zones section, below, to determine which forecast applies to your area.

The Ventilation Index **must** be forecast as **Good** (afternoon) for the day any open burn is started and **Good or Fair** (afternoon) for the second day of smoke release. If the Ventilation Index is not available for your area, you must conduct an on-site test burn on the day of the proposed burn, lasting no longer than 60 minutes, to evaluate whether weather conditions are conducive to good dispersion. Another alternative if the Ventilation Index is not available for your area or you are at an elevation above the predicted mixing height, is a Spot Forecast from Environment Canada.

Debris must not be added to an existing burn if:

- weather conditions change and the ventilation index becomes **Poor** (afternoon), ie. you must re-assess ventilation conditions before adding any additional material after the initial day of ignition;
- local winds make smoke dispersion inadequate;
- a temperature inversion forms trapping smoke near the surface;
- any related restrictions have been imposed by WLAP or any other regulatory agency (ie. burn ban).

**Open burning of debris must not be initiated or new material added if atmospheric mixing is insufficient to provide rapid dispersion of smoke emissions or if the air flow will cause the smoke to negatively impact on a nearby population or cause pollution. Please note that ventilation indices normally drop to Poor after sunset.**

See Contacts Section for how to get ventilation conditions.

## ***WLAP Burning Restrictions***

WLAP's Regional Waste Manager has the authority to restrict open burning for specified areas and periods by requiring a Permit or Approval to open burn. To determine if WLAP burning restrictions are in effect, you must call the WLAP Air Quality Information Line for Skeena Region before you burn (1-888-281-2992), or contact 1-250-847-7260 to be put on a notification fax list (you will need to supply contact phone number as backup in case fax fails).

## Open Burning Without A Permit

If you meet the conditions identified in the Open Burning Requirements and Required Atmospheric Conditions Sections, you are free to burn without a WLAP Air Emission Permit. If you need a Permit, call WLAP at 1-250-847-7260.

## Prohibited Materials

asphalt	asphalt products
biomedical waste	demolition waste
domestic waste	drywall
fuel containers	lubricant containers
manure	paint
tar paper	plastics
railway ties	rubber
special waste	treated lumber
tires	

## Exemptions to the Regulation

The *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation* **does not** apply to:

- agricultural and residential ('backyard') burning of foliage, weed, crops, or stubble.

\*Residents should check with local government for any bylaws related to burning in their area.

## Skeena Region Ventilation Zones

### **Lakes District (use Burns Lake Ventilation Index)**

- Nechako Drainage Basin; this includes all tributaries such as Ootsa, Eutsuk, Tetachuck, Cheslatta, Francois, and Endako Drainage Basins.

### **Bulkley Valley and Upper Skeena (use Smithers Ventilation Index)**

- Zymoetz River Drainage Basin upstream of Mulwain Creek;
- Skeena River Drainage Basin upstream of and including Kitsequecla; this includes all tributaries such as the Babine, Bulkley, Telkwa, and Morice drainages;

### **Inland North Coast (use Stewart Ventilation Index)**

- Nass River, Portland Inlet, and Observatory Inlet Drainage Basins.

### **Inland Coast (use Terrace Ventilation Index)**

- Kitimat and Kildala Arm Drainage Basins;
- Kitimat River Drainage Basin;
- Skeena River Drainage Basin downstream of Kitsequecla;
- Zymoetz River Drainage Basin downstream of and including Mulwain Creek.

## Contacts

### **Ventilation Index**

- 1) *WLAP Air Quality Information Line for Skeena Region (1-888-281-2992)*:
  - WLAP burning restriction and air quality advisory information-indicated on phone line by location and only when in effect;
  - Venting conditions and how to interpret them (Ventilation Zones are defined above and on the Information Line)-updated 7 days a week by 7:00am;
  - Regulatory information (Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation);
  - Air quality conditions (not required to open burn)-updated Monday to Friday by 9:00am.
- 2) *Environment Canada Voice Recording: 1-866-640-6369 (\$0.95 per minute)*
- 3) *Environment Canada Web Page:*  
[http://nat.weatheroffice.pyr.ec.gc.ca/forecast/textforecast\\_e.html?Bulletin=fpcn39.cw/w](http://nat.weatheroffice.pyr.ec.gc.ca/forecast/textforecast_e.html?Bulletin=fpcn39.cw/w)
- 4) *Environment Canada Spot Forecast:*  
Call 1-900-565-5555 to set up an account (\$25 fee per faxed report) and to obtain spot forecasts (need elevation, aspect and lat/long of burn)

WLAP Smithers Office (1-250-847-7260)

- Burn Permit applications;
- Regulation interpretation;
- Reporting regulation violations;
- General air quality enquiries.

Service available 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday.

### **Reporting Violations**

- WLAP Smithers Office Monday-Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm at 1-250-847-7260
- Weekends, evenings, and holidays 1-800-663-3456.

### **Alternatives to Burning**

- BC Recycling Hotline 1-800-667-4321.

### **Weather, Air Quality, and Open Burning Information On The Web**

- WLAP Skeena Region Air Quality:  
<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/ske/skeair/>
- Ministry of Forests: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/for/>
- Environment Canada: <http://www.weatheroffice.com>

### **Other Related Agencies**

- Contact your District Forest Office (phone book blue pages), Municipality, or Fire Department regarding other conditions or restrictions. Call 1-888-797-1717 to obtain a Ministry of Forests burning reference number;
- Copies of the *Waste Management Act* and the *Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation* may be viewed at any WLAP office. They may also be obtained from:

Crown Publications Inc.  
521 Fort Street  
Victoria, British Columbia  
V8W 1E7  
Telephone: 1-250-386-4636

Acts and regulations may be viewed on the Web at <http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/> by going to the Waste Management Act. Many public libraries provide Internet access at no charge.



BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection  
Skeena Region