

The Environment Agency and local authority Environmental Health departments receive high numbers of complaints about the burning of waste every year. Fires containing trade or commercial waste are illegal. This leaflet sets out what you can and can't do with your waste.

### Types of waste

**Construction**- It is illegal to burn construction or demolition waste. The only exception is plant material. This can be burned under a D7 exemption which must be registered with the Environment Agency.

**Mixed household**- You can not burn mixed household waste. Householders can take their waste to a household recycling centre or contact their local council about 'bulky waste' collections. Landlords should arrange for the proper disposal of waste left at their properties.

**Waste cable** - It is illegal for you to burn cable to recover the metal core unless your premises are registered with the local authority. This is an offence under the Clean Air Act 1993.

**Farm** - You must not burn inorganic farm waste, such as plastic and tyres, in the open. You can no longer use a drum incinerator to burn agricultural or veterinary containers contaminated with pesticides or other toxic substances.

**Horse manure** - Horse manure from commercial stables is commercial waste and can not be burned. Private horse owners can burn small amounts on their land, however we recommend you compost manure or use it as a soil improver.

**Would you like to find out more about us, or about your environment?**

**Then call us on**  
03708 506 506\* (Mon-Fri 8-6)

**email**  
enquiries@environment-  
agency.gov.uk

**or visit our website**  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

**incident hotline** 0800 80 70 60 (24hrs)  
**floodline** 0845 988 1188

\* Calls to 03 numbers cost the same as calls to standard geographic numbers (i.e. numbers beginning with 01 or 02).

**Environment first:** If you print a paper copy, please use recycled paper. If you are looking at a paper copy, please make sure you re-use or recycle.



**waste  
management  
it's a burning  
issue**



## The problem with burning waste

### It can harm the environment

- Burning waste can release harmful gases, grit and dust.
- Smoke can be a nuisance to neighbours and harm human health.
- Dark smoke, produced when tyres, plastics, rubbers, oils and paints are burned, can be particularly hazardous.
- Ash can contain harmful chemicals. These can be washed into the ground when it rains.

### It does not use resources wisely

- You should reduce, re-use, recycle or recover waste materials before disposing of them in the most appropriate way.
- Burning waste is generally only appropriate as first choice of disposal if the waste provides an efficient fuel.

### It is often against the law

- It is illegal to burn most types of waste.
- Some wastes can be burned in certain circumstances - but only if you hold the relevant permit or registered waste exemption.
- You can be fined **up to £20,000** under the Clean Air Act if you burn trade or commercial waste and it releases dark smoke.
- You can be fined **up to £50,000** for illegal waste management under the Environmental Permitting Regulations.
- You will have committed an offence under the Highways Act if smoke drifts across a highway and causes, or risks causing, an accident.

## What you can burn

You must have the correct permissions before you burn waste. You must also make sure you do not pollute the environment or cause a nuisance. Exemptions are available which allow small-scale burning of certain wastes.

Burning waste under a registered exemption does not allow you to cause nuisance to your neighbours. You must also check with your local authority that you are not in a Smoke Free Zone.

### Burning waste in the open

You may qualify for a D7 exemption to burn plant material and untreated wood in the open if:

- you burn the waste where it was produced;
- you do not burn more than 10 tonnes in 24hrs.

This exemption applies mainly to people who burn their own plant material in their garden. This is often called 'garden waste' and includes branches, shrubbery, foliage, clean wood and vegetation. You can not burn painted fences, sheds, furniture and general rubbish.

### Burning waste as a fuel in a small appliance

You may qualify for a U4 exemption to burn plant material and untreated wood as a fuel if:

- you burn up to 50kg of waste as fuel per hour;
- the appliance has a total net-rated value of less than 0.4 megawatts.

### Disposal of waste by incineration

You may qualify for a D6 exemption to burn plant material and untreated wood in an incinerator or a waste combustion plant if:

- you are the person who produced the waste;
- the incinerator has a capacity of less than 50kg per hour;
- the waste combustion plant has a total net-rated thermal input of less than 0.4 megawatts.

Exemptions must be registered with the Environment Agency. You can register online at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waste](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waste) or by calling 03708 506 506. They are easy to register and there is no cost.

## Guy Fawke's Night and other celebrations

We want you to enjoy Guy Fawke's Night. You are allowed to burn clean, non-commercial, waste at traditional cultural events and on small campfires.

We ask organisers to make sure:

- waste is secure before being burned;
- the material is suitable. It **may include** untreated wood, branches, and small amounts of leaves, card and paper. **Never include** plastics, rubber, glass or metal etc;
- the size of the bonfire or campfire is appropriate.

## Summary

When you burn waste, you lose a potential resource. You also risk polluting our air, land or water. You should always look for alternative methods of waste management. You must always follow the waste hierarchy - prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, recovery and, finally, disposal.

**Do not be tempted to fly-tip your waste.** If you dump waste, you risk being fined up to **£50,000** in a magistrates' court. A crown court can give you an **unlimited fine** and you could go to **prison**. Fly-tipping is a serious offence.

## More information

The Environment Agency and local authorities are happy to provide guidance on dealing with your waste. You can find out more on our website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waste](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/waste)