

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

RICH FITZGERALD  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) passed a revision to its Open Burning regulation. The changes affect all citizens of Allegheny County, and were made in order to better protect public and environmental health.

We are contacting you today to make you aware of the new regulation which ACHD began enforcing on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. As local municipal officials, we rely on you to help us reach all Allegheny County residents, and to gauge the needs of your constituents.

ACHD inspectors will do their part to respond to citizen complaints and enforce the regulation, however, municipal or local government units are also authorized to enforce this regulation and can often respond while open burning is occurring. ACHD encourages municipalities, local fire departments, and local police departments to work together to minimize nuisance burning.

Open burning in Allegheny County is defined as any fire or combustion from which air contaminants pass directly into the open air without passing through a flue. The definition of open burning has been revised to include any fire or combustion which occurs in a chiminea, fire pit, outdoor fireplace, or grill. The ACHD open burning regulation has been in place since about 1970 in order to minimize the public health hazards of open burning. Since wood smoke contains fine particulate pollution and air toxics, and can aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular health issues, this revision further strengthens the rule to reduce this impact.

The revised Open Burning regulation gives greater discretion to ACHD, and municipal, inspectors to end fires that are unhealthy, or causing a nuisance. It also sets limits on burning, including limiting fires to a maximum overall size of 3 feet wide by 3 feet long by 2 feet high for wood burning.

The regulation also restricts materials that may be combusted in open burning to clean wood, propane, or natural gas, with exceptions that allow for using charcoal in outdoor fireplaces or grills for the purpose of cooking, and also for using fire logs, paraffin logs or wood pellets in outdoor fireplaces.

Importantly, the regulation restricts all recreational open burning, except for the commercial preparation of food, on air quality action days. This restriction is not applicable to charcoal or propane grills. Air quality action days occur when the Air Quality Index (AQI), a measurement of pollution levels in the region, is at the "orange" or "unhealthy" level. In 2013, there were 15 air quality action days. Allegheny Alerts, a free County notification system, can be used to alert officials and citizens of air quality action days when burning is prohibited. Signups can be made online at [www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts). Alerts are free and can be delivered via email, text, or through a free

Everbridge mobile app. The AQI can also be viewed online at [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) or the ACHD website, [www.achd.net](http://www.achd.net).

The revisions to the Open Burning regulation are applicable to all municipalities of Allegheny County. ACHD encourages each of you as a municipal official to evaluate the needs of your constituency to determine if a stricter ordinance would be beneficial.

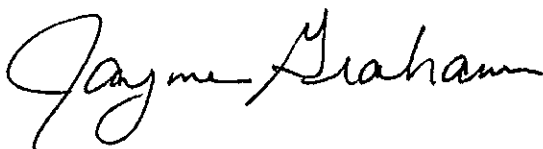
The Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP), a local environmental advocacy group, has offered to help any municipality interested in adopting a stricter ordinance. Please contact Jamin Bogi at [jamin@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:jamin@gasp-pgh.org) or (412) 924-0604 for more information.

We encourage you to make your constituency aware of this new regulation, to aid ACHD in enforcement of the regulation, and to evaluate if adoption of a stricter ordinance would benefit your communities. We appreciate all the work you do to help us protect our residents and make Allegheny County one of the most livable communities in the country.

Enclosed you will find a regulation fact sheet and the full regulation.

Please contact us at 412-578-8120 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Jayme Graham  
ACHD Air Quality Program Manager

**ACHD 24-Hour Complaint line: 412-687-2243**  
**[www.achd.net/air/burning/](http://www.achd.net/air/burning/)**

# ACHD Open Burning Regulation

## FACT SHEET

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- No material other than clean wood, propane, or natural gas may be open burned EXCEPT for:
  - Commercially available fire logs, paraffin logs, or wood pellets;
  - Paper or commercial smokeless fire starters in order to start a fire;
  - Charcoal for the preparation of food only.
  
- Fires may be no larger than 3' wide by 3' long by 2' high.
  
- Fires must be at least 15 feet from the nearest neighbor's dwelling or inhabited area, including:
  - Property line
  - Roadway
  - Sidewalk
  - Public access area
  
- Wood burning activities are prohibited on Air Quality Action days, with the exception of burning for the commercial preparation of food
  - Subscribe to receive email, text, or smart phone app notifications of burn ban days at [www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/alerts)
  
- Burning may be prohibited or reduced if it is considered a nuisance, based on the following criteria:
  - The severity of the amount of air pollutants;
  - The duration or frequency of open burning;
  - The topography of the surroundings;
  - The meteorological conditions.
  
- Open burning permits are available for ceremonies fostering of agriculture, abatement of a public health hazard, and firefighting instruction; however, all permitted open burning is prohibited on Air Quality Action Days.
  - Contact ACHD at (412) 578-7963 for more information