

# Pile Burning in Sonoma

## ACR's Fire Forward program

### 1. **Building the Pile:**

- a. Decide what is best fit for you and your land: to pile burn, chip or haul away.
- b. Make sure brush, limbs, leaves etc. have dried for at least 60 days. The more it dries, the cleaner it will burn.
- c. The legal "home burner" pile size is 4' in diameter and 4' tall. You can add to this as it burns down.
- d. Make sure your burn pile has at least 10' of clearance on all sides of other vegetation or structures and is clear above it.
- e. Build it on flattest ground possible. If you must build on a hill, dig a "role out" trench just below it, so that hot coals or logs will not role downhill.
- f. Build your pile with as vertical of sides as possible. This helps with a clean burn.
- g. Do not add non-vegetative materials to your pile. Do not burn trash.

### 2. **Air quality fees:**

- h. Determine if you are in the Bay Area Air Quality Management District or Northern Sonoma County Air Pollution Control District.  
Visit [sonomacounty.ca.gov/Air-Quality/](http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Air-Quality/) to see boundary.
- i. If in the BAAQMD, fill out the open burn form and pay the annual fee (roughly \$133.00). <https://www.baaqmd.gov/permits/open-burn>
- j. If in NoSoCo Air District fill out the open burn form and pay the annual fee.  
<https://www.nosocoair.net/permits.html>

### 3. **Burn permit and season:**

- k. The typical "Open Burn Season", is from Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Although, this can vary depending on local weather. Check for details at:  
<https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov/current-burn-status/>
- l. Determine if you are in "state responsible area" or "local responsible area" or both. Contact your local fire district or your local CAL FIRE station to find out.  
<http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Fire-Prevention/>  
<https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov/before-you-burn/>
- m. If in "SRA" then you will need a burn permit from CAL FIRE. They are free, informative and found at: <https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov/apply-for-a-permit/>
- n. If you are in the "LRA" check with your city or county fire district that covers you, for burn permitting.

### 4. **Day of Burn:**

- o. If in the BAAQMD, on the morning of the burn, call BAAQMD hotline to check to see if its permissible burn day: 800-792-0787 or  
online at [www.baaqmd.gov/about-air-quality/current-air-quality](http://www.baaqmd.gov/about-air-quality/current-air-quality)

- p. If in the NoSoCo Air District, on the morning of the burn, call the hotline to check to see if its permissible burn day: # 707-565-2876
- q. Notify Sonoma County's REDCOM dispatch (707-565-1700) of the address where you are burning, a phone contact, how many piles and at what time you plan to burn.
- r. If possible, notify your local fire district (CAL FIRE or local) of the address where you are burning, a phone contact, how many piles and at what time you plan to burn.
- s. No burning shall be undertaken unless weather conditions are such that burning can be considered safe. Do Not burn on a windy day, as this substantially increases the chance of an escape. The liability is on the person lighting and landowner.
- t. If you are on a local Facebook group or Nextdoor, it can be a courtesy to put a message out to neighbors.
- u. Wear appropriate clothing: leather work boots, jeans, long sleeve natural fiber shirt, leather gloves and eye protection.
- v. Clear a line, 10' around your pile, down to bare earth.
- w. Have a water source and shovel at the burn site.
- x. Start burning no earlier than 10 am, so that any inversion layer may lift. Be at "burn down" (aka be adding no more material) by 3pm. These acts allow for better smoke dispersal and cleaner air.
- y. An adult is required to be in attendance of the fire. Invite friends too!
- z. To extinguish, one can either:
  - Let the pile burn down to ash (if the weather is permissive).
  - Douse the pile with lots of water, while stirring with a shovel. It takes more water than you think! You should end up with "bio-char" or charcoal, which is a great garden soil amendment, as it holds water, soil microbes, and stable carbon (as apposed to the atmosphere).

**Resources:**

- <https://www.egret.org/fire-forward>
- <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Good-Fire-Alliance-186216225593746/>
- <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Fire-Prevention/Press-Releases/Burn-Permit-Suspension-Lifted-Sonoma-Lake-Napa-Unit/>
- <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prevent-wildfire/debris-burning/>