

Polk County Open Burning of Disaster Debris, Flood Debris & Trees and Tree Trimmings Procedure

Per Polk County Board of Health Rules & Regulations, Chapter V-Air Pollution, Article III, Section 5-7 Open Burning Prohibited

This procedure shall apply to areas within Polk County when under a state/presidential disaster proclamation.

This procedure is intended for governmental entities (municipalities/counties) that are accumulating disaster debris.

Opening burning of disaster debris shall be allowed for 90 days following a state disaster proclamation. (Variances may be granted to the 90 day timeline on a case-by-case basis, subject to Polk County Board of Health approval)

Open burning of disaster debris shall be conducted using the following guidelines:

General

All governmental entities must obtain a permit to burn from the Polk County Air Quality Division prior to open burning of disaster debris, flood debris, trees or tree trimmings.

Local officials are encouraged to contact Polk County Public Works Department's Air Quality Division for assistance.

Polk County Public Works Department – Air Quality Division
5885 NE 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50313
(515) 286-3351
Fax (515) 875-5599

DISASTER DEBRIS & FLOOD DEBRIS

The burn site shall be operated by a local governmental entity.

Access is controlled to the site. Local officials may use their discretion in determining whether the site needs to be fenced.

Burning is supervised at all times.

Burning is conducted only when weather conditions are favorable with respect to surrounding property.

Tires must be removed from the debris and shall not be used to ignite the fire.

The burning site is limited to areas at least one-quarter mile from any inhabited building. If the one-quarter mile separation distance can not be met, the owner of a building may provide a written waiver in the form of an affidavit to the department and to the local governmental entity. There is no requirement that the affidavit be filed with the county recorder. Alternatively, the inhabitants of the building within one-quarter mile of the burn site may be evacuated during the duration of the disaster burn. If a current tree burning site will be used to burn disaster debris, notification must be made to the owner of any inhabited building within one-quarter mile of the site. (The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that any

residences within one-quarter mile are aware that disaster debris, rather than trees and tree trimmings, are being burned at the site.)

Multiple burns of smaller piles are preferable over one large burn pile. Burning should be conducted so that each burn is completed each day. The purpose of this guideline is to prevent large piles of smoking debris for days, weeks or months.

Ash and remaining materials left over from the disaster debris burn is considered solid waste and shall be disposed of at a sanitary disposal project.

Alternatives to burning include recycling, salvaging and landfilling.

ASBESTOS

Asbestos containing material shall be removed from the disaster debris before burning. Material suspected of containing asbestos shall not be burned. Examples of asbestos containing material includes asphalt shingles, roofing felt, transite siding (also known as slate or cement board), pipe insulation, ceiling tile, floor tile, linoleum, sheet rock, plaster and insulation etc. Asbestos containing material should be wetted down and disposed at a sanitary disposal project.

If communities wish to burn suspect materials, they may hire a trained inspector to sample the materials to determine if asbestos is present, and to assist with determining if materials can be separated.

Partially destroyed public/commercial buildings can be demolished after asbestos materials are removed by abatement contractors. If the building is unsafe for abatement contractors the building is considered to be destroyed and assumed to contain asbestos. An asbestos abatement contractor must be present during demolition and disposal.

TREES AND TREE TRIMMINGS

Non-burn disposal methods are generally preferred to open burning of trees and tree trimmings, and shall be employed whenever practical and reasonable.

Alternatives to open burning include, but are not limited to: tub grinding, chipping or composting (for landscape waste or clean wood only), material salvaging, or recycling.

Landscape waste, trees and tree trimmings shall be separated and burned separately from other disaster debris.

Existing tree and tree trimming sites should be utilized for burning.