

Under the *Environmental Management Act*, a new **Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (OBSCR)** came into effect on September 15, 2019. This factsheet summarizes the main requirements for burning under the OBSCR.

Does OBSCR apply to your open burning?

- OBSCR applies to open-fire combustion of vegetative debris generated from a range of activities, such as:
 - ✓ Land clearing
 - ✓ Forestry operations
 - ✓ Agriculture and silviculture
 - ✓ Community wildfire risk reduction
 - ✓ Wildlife habitat enhancement
 - ✓ Utility right of ways
- OBSCR does not apply to:
 - ✗ Fires for training purposes under the *Fire Services Act*.
 - ✗ Resource management open fires or fire control (S.9) under the *Wildfire Act*.
 - ✗ Burning of leaves, foliage, weeds, crops or stubble for domestic or agricultural purposes or in compliance with the *Weed Control Act*.
 - ✗ Campfires.

What other requirements apply to your open burning?

- Open burning must also meet any bylaw requirements set by local governments.
- Open burning may also require:
 - A permit from the local fire department.
 - A Burn Registration Number from the B.C. Wildfire Service: **1 888 797-1717**
- Open fires must comply with any:
 - Open burning prohibition issued by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.
 - Ban from a fire department, local government, or an improvement district.
- Burning is not authorized contrary to the *Wildfire Act*.

Smoke Sensitivity Zones (SSZ)

Under OBSCR, the province is divided into three categories of Smoke Sensitivity Zones.

- **High:** areas in and around communities.
- **Medium:** areas around smallest communities, rural locations, transportation corridors.
- **Low:** areas distant from communities.

Burning requirements are strictest in high SSZ and are less strict in medium and low SSZ.

To find out the zone of your location, you can view the SSZ maps [online](#) or contact a Ministry office.

Key Definitions for Open Burning

Start Time: when piles are first ignited.

End Time: when each pile has ceased flaming and is emitting smoke from no more than 10% of its burnt surface area.

Seasoned Vegetative Debris:

- Dry-basis moisture content within 30%, or
- piled for at least 4 months, or
- originated from standing dead timber.

Ventilation Forecasts

- Required to determine if local atmospheric conditions are favourable for dispersing smoke.
- Can be obtained as a Ventilation Forecast or as a Custom Ventilation Forecast.
- Provide a Ventilation Index as *Good, Fair or Poor*.
- Ventilation Index requirements under OBSCR vary by smoke sensitivity zones and according to certain open burning purposes.

Ventilation Forecast

- Afternoon forecast issued by Environment Canada.
- Obtained on the same day, but before, burning starts.
- Available [online](#) for 40 venting index zones.

Custom Ventilation Forecast (CVF)

- Specific to local conditions in a geographic area.
- Obtained the day before or on the same day, but before, burning starts.
- Issued by an approved forecaster and submitted before burning to the Ministry by email:

OBSCRCVF@gov.bc.ca

General Requirements for Open Burning

Before open burning

- Every reasonable alternative must be used to minimize burning amounts by reducing, reusing or recycling vegetative debris.
- All reasonable efforts must be taken to minimize smoke by following best practices for open burning, such as:
 - Minimizing soil content, maximizing seasoned vegetative debris
 - Constructing any debris piles in a way that maximizes air flow
- Vegetative debris can be moved only within 5 km from its original location.
- No prohibited materials are allowed in any open burning. Prohibited materials are listed at the end of this factsheet.

Starting or continuing an open burn

- Even if all OBSCR requirements are met and the *forecasted* venting conditions are favourable, open burning must not be started nor continued if the *actual* venting conditions are unfavourably causing or will likely cause smoke to:
- negatively impact a nearby population centre or a work camp,
 - be a navigation hazard for nearby airports or highways.

Setbacks for open burning

All open burning that fall under OBSCR must meet the minimum setback distances away from specified properties.

- General setbacks apply for most open burning.
- Reduced setbacks apply for *one-day* open burning that:
 - starts not earlier than one hour after sunrise,
 - ends by the later of 4 p.m. or two hours before sunset,
 - meets all the **specific conditions for reduced setbacks**.

Property Type	General Setback	Reduced Setback
Residence or business buildings	500 metres	100 metres
Nearest property line of schools, hospitals & community care facilities	1000 metres	500 metres

Specific Conditions for Reduced Setbacks

- All vegetative debris is seasoned.
- All vegetative debris is put in piles.
- For each pile, the largest horizontal dimension is not greater than twice the vertical dimension.
- No stumps are included, and diameter of the largest part of each separate debris portion is less than 50 centimetres.
- If ventilation or custom ventilation forecasts are available, the forecast is *Good* for the open burning day.
- Written record of when debris was piled is available.
- No later than 24 hours before open burning starts, reasonable efforts are made to notify all residences, businesses, schools, hospitals and community care facilities within 500 metres of the open burning location.

Open burning requirements for domestic or agricultural purposes

OBSCR applies to open burning for domestic or agricultural purposes according to the following requirements:

- All of the vegetative debris is branches or other pieces of vegetative debris, with or without leaves.
- Open-burning requirements are based on the diameter of each branch or piece.

As with any other purpose, open burning for domestic or agricultural purposes must also follow any local, regional or other bylaws.

Diameter	Requirements
Less than 3 cm	Total exemption, OBSCR does not apply.
Between 3 cm and 10 cm	Three OBSCR provisions apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vegetative debris must not be moved more than 5 km from its original location. ▪ Prohibited materials are not allowed. ▪ Open burning must adhere to any burn ban.
Greater than 10 cm	No exemptions, OBSCR fully applies.

Specific Requirements Based on Smoke Sensitivity Zones

Allowable number of periods for open burning

Within or partially within High Smoke Sensitivity Zone

For open burning on a **private parcel of land** that is **smaller than 64 hectares**, allowable number of burning days are:

- 12 days or portions of days in each calendar year, and
- 6 days in each calendar month.

Within Medium or Low Smoke Sensitivity Zone

There is no limit to the overall number of days for open burning.

Private Parcel of Land Under OBSCR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Parcel of land</i> means a lot, block or other area in which land is held or into which land is subdivided. ▪ <i>Private land</i> means land in respect of which a person other than Her Majesty the Queen holds a fee simple or leasehold interest.

Open burning for less than one day

If ventilation conditions are favourable only for one day in a High or a Medium Smoke Sensitivity Zone, open burning can be conducted within one day subject to a number of requirements.

SSZ	Vegetative Debris	Ventilation Index	Start Time	End Time
High	Seasoned	<i>Good</i>	One hour after sunrise or later	Later of 4 p.m. or 2 hours before sunset
Medium	NA			

Open burning for more than one day

If ventilation conditions are favourable for more than a day, burning requirements vary with Smoke Sensitivity Zones.

SSZ	Vegetative Debris	Consecutive Period	Ventilation Index	Start Time	End Time
High	Seasoned	Within 2 days	<i>Good</i> on 1 st day	One hour after sunrise or later on 1 st day	4 p.m. on last day
Medium	NA	Within 4 days	<i>Good or Fair</i> on 2 nd day		
Low	NA	Within 6 days	<i>Good or Fair</i> on 1 st day <i>Good or Fair</i> on 2 nd day	NA	

SSZ	Igniting Unlit Piles	Adding Unlit Debris to Ignited Piles
High	On 1 st day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Starting 1 hour after sunrise ➤ Ending 4 hours before sunset 	
Medium	On 1 st day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Starting 1 hour after sunrise ➤ Ending 2 hours before sunset 	On 1 st and 2 nd days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Starting 1 hour after sunrise ➤ Ending 2 hours before sunset ➤ Ventilation Forecast or CVF obtained on 2nd day, <i>Good or Fair</i>
Low	NA	

Miscellaneous Requirements

Prohibition on open burning

If the Ministry determines that pollution is occurring, or is likely to occur, from open burning in a geographic area, the Ministry may temporarily prohibit open burning in that area. A prohibition or “burn ban” may include the following:

- All open burning must be extinguished
- No vegetative debris may be ignited or added to ignited piles

If pollution in the area is no longer occurring, the Ministry may end the prohibition on open burning.

Records and reporting

A record must be made if the open burning includes:

- One or more Category 3 open fires ¹
- One or more air curtain incinerators

A record must be kept, retained and submitted upon request as specified in the regulation. Based on that record, the Ministry may further require submission of a report with specific information. Details of record keeping and reporting requirements can be found in the regulation.

Enforcement

Violations of the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation may result in fines of up to \$200,000.

The Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation is enforced by the BC Conservation Officer Service.

Open burning violations can be reported through the Ministry’s **Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP)** hotline:

<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/> **1 877-952-7277**

Looking for more information?

This factsheet contains a summary of the main requirements for open burning under OBSCR. Additional specific requirements can be found in other factsheets and guidance documents. For complete regulatory requirements, please refer to the [Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation](#).

OBSCR Website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-pollution/smoke-burning/regulations/openburningregulation>

Contains further information on the regulation, links to [Smoke Sensitivity Zone Maps](#) and [Venting Index Interactive Map](#).

OBSCR Questions: **Ventilation Index online:** <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/venting/venting.html>

OBSCR@gov.bc.ca **Fire Bans and Restrictions:** <http://bcfireinfo.for.gov.bc.ca/hprScripts/WildfireNews/Bans.asp>

Ventilation Index and burning bans: **1 888-281-2992**

The following prohibited materials must not be burned

- | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| × Animal carcasses and waste from animal slaughtering | × Domestic waste | × Plastics |
| × Asphalt or asphalt products | × Electrical wire | × Polystyrene foam |
| × Batteries | × Fibreglass and other fibre-reinforced polymers | × Railway ties |
| × Biomedical waste | × Fuel and lubricant containers | × Rubber |
| × Carpets | × Furniture and appliances | × Tar paper |
| × Construction waste* | × Hazardous waste | × Tires |
| × Demolition waste | × Manure | × Treated or painted wood products |
| × Drywall | × Paint and varnish | × Used oil |

**Other than lumber not treated with wood preservatives or other chemicals and not coated with paint, varnish, oil or other finishing material*

¹ Open fire that burns: material concurrently in three (3) or more piles each not exceeding 2m in height and 3m in width, or material in one or more piles each exceeding 2m in height or 3m in width, or one or more windrows.