

Yard Debris: Caution urged in doing away with debris

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The Oregon Department of Forestry and other fire prevention experts urge the public to exercise caution when disposing of yard debris this fall.

With the end of fire season, many Oregonians have debris piles ready to be disposed of that cured over the summer. Preferable options for removal, aside from burning, include composting or recycling. Check with your local disposal company for recycling options.

If burning now is the only option to dispose of yard debris, fire prevention specialists ask people to follow safe burning practices.

The following tips can help stop run-away burn piles:

Call before you burn – Burning regulations vary by location depending on the weather and fuel conditions. If you are planning to burn, check with your local Oregon Department of Forestry district, fire protective

association, fire department, or air protection authority to learn about current burning restrictions or regulations, and if you need a permit.

Know the weather – Burn early in the day and never burn on dry or windy days, because fires can spread out of control more easily.

Clear a 10-foot fuel-free buffer around the pile – Scrape a ten-foot trail down to mineral soil around the perimeter of the pile to keep the fire contained in one place. Make sure there are no tree branches or power lines above

Keep burn piles small – Large burn piles can cast hot embers long distances. Keep piles small, maximum of four feet by four feet. Add debris to the pile in small amounts as the pile burns.

Always have water and fire tools nearby – When burning, have a charged water hose, and shovel on hand to put out the fire. Keep the area around the pile damp during the burning process. When finished, drown the pile with water, stir the coals, and drown again, repeating until the fire is out cold.

Stay with the fire until it is out cold – State laws requires monitoring of debris burn piles from start to finish until it is out cold. This law is intended to ensure sparks or embers that jump from the fire can be put out quickly.

Recheck burn piles. They can retain heat for several weeks and restart when the weather warms up and winds blow.

Never use gasoline or other flammable or combustible liquids to start or speed up your fire.

Burn only yard debris – State laws prohibit burning materials or trash that create dense smoke or noxious odors.

Costs of run-away debris burns– State law requires the proper clearing, building, attending and extinguishing of open fires all year. If your debris burn spreads out of control, you may have to pay for suppression costs, as well as the damage to your neighbors' properties. This can be extremely expensive.

More tips on wildfire prevention, including campfire safety, motorized equipment use, and fire-resistant landscaping can be found on the Keep Oregon Green website. Find public use restrictions for Oregon Department of Forestry protected lands before your burn.