

# OPEN BURNING

## It's Not As Harmless As It Seems!

**In fact it's downright dangerous! The composition of common household trash contains many materials that become very toxic when burned and can lead to serious health problems such as lung cancer, emphysema and bronchitis.**

**For many years people have burned their trash without understanding the complex and serious dangers that occur as solid waste transforms into air pollution. Besides the fact that it is illegal, there are several good reasons not to burn trash, and the composition of modern refuse has everything to do with it. Now more than ever, we find that literally thousands of common products are made of plastic, or other synthetic materials. A few examples: Plastic wrap, eating utensils, cups, bottles, toys, pipes, furniture, sneakers, litter boxes, clothes, computer components, pens, storage containers, trash cans, document protectors, electrical outlet covers, etc... etc.. etc...**



**The durability and economic convenience of synthetic materials has fast made them a way of life. However, the sheer number of products produced with synthetics has posed a problem with disposal.**

**When burned uncontrolled, plastics such as polyvinylchloride (PVC) emit chlorinated dioxins and furans, both of which are know carcinogens (cause cancer). PVC contains 56 percent chlorine and when it is burned produces large quantities of hydrogen chloride gas which combines with water to form hydrochloric acid in the lungs. Over time, exposure to chemicals exiting the burn barrel can lead to chronic diseases such as emphysema and cancer. Children are especially at risk because their immune systems are not fully developed. A child breathing the same polluted air as an adult will absorb up to six times more of the combustion products.**

**The smoke from one burn barrel poses a significant threat to those who suffer from respiratory illnesses such as asthma. Besides creating a health hazard, burning refuse creates a nuisance by producing putrid odors and dense clouds of smoke which may become offensive to neighbors.**

**The best way to deal with solid waste is to prevent it. By shopping wisely and choosing items with a minimum of packaging you can reduce the amount of trash you produce. You can also buy reusable items such as travel mugs, string shopping bags, and shaving razors. Why not bring your lunch bag home and use it again?**

**Lastly, The Vermont Legislature unanimously passed the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148) in 2012, which bans disposal of recyclables (paper, cardboard aluminum, steel, glass, and hard plastics #1 & #2) as of JULY 1, 2015, leaf and yard debris and clean wood by JULY 1, 2016 and food scraps by JULY 1, 2020. The law also requires trash haulers and drop off facilities to provide collection services for these materials.**

**Plain and simple, burning trash to save a few dollars isn't worth the price of your family's health. Help keep the air clean.**





**FOR ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION**

**If you would like more information about open burning, please call the Air Quality and Climate Division at (802) 828-1288, by email at [dave.shepard@vermont.gov](mailto:dave.shepard@vermont.gov), or write to the following address:**

**Air Quality and Climate Division  
Davis Building—2nd Floor  
One National Life Drive  
Montpelier, Vermont 05620**

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**Air Pollution  
Control  
in Vermont**



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