



Town of Dennis - Open Burning Safety

To burn brush in your yard, you need a permit from the local fire department.

The Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and your local fire department limit open burning for public health and safety reasons. Learn when and where open burning is allowed, and how to do it safely.

Open Burning Permits & Restrictions

Open burning of brush is allowed from January 15 to May 1 in the Town of Dennis with a permit.

If you would like to conduct open burning contact the Dennis **Fire Department** to obtain an **open burning permit** in advance. Permits are available on line. State fire wardens determine each day whether conditions are safe for open burning. Weather and air quality can change rapidly, especially in the spring, and fire departments can rescind permits when that happens.

Open burning must be done:

- Between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. from **January 15 to April 30**
- At least **75 feet from all buildings**
- As close as possible to the source of material being burned
- On acceptable days as determined by the Dennis Fire Department
- Constantly attended by a person over 18, with access to fire extinguishment tools.
- When air quality is acceptable for burning.

What can I burn?

You are allowed to burn:

- Brush, cane, driftwood and forestry debris (but **not** from commercial or industrial land clearing)
- Agricultural materials including fruit tree and bush prunings, raspberry stalks, and infected bee hives for disease control.
- Trees and brush from agricultural land clearing
- Fungus-infected elm wood, if no other acceptable means of disposal is available

You may not burn:

- **Leaves**
- Brush, trees, cane or driftwood from **commercial or industrial** land clearing
- Grass, hay, leaves, stumps or tires
- Construction materials or demolition debris
- Household trash

How do I safely start & tend a fire?

- An adult should always be present and attend the fire until it is completely extinguished.
- Keep children and pets a safe distance away.
- Burn away from any utility lines.
- Use paper and kindling to start the fire and add progressively larger pieces of wood. Pieces of a discarded Christmas tree make good kindling. To avoid the risk of personal injury, never use gasoline, kerosene or other flammable liquid as a fire starter.
- Burn one small pile of material at a time and slowly add to it. This helps keep the fire from getting out of control.
- Keep fire extinguishing materials handy. These should include a water supply, shovels and rakes. The water supply can be a pressurized water fire extinguisher, pump can, or garden hose. Test the water source before lighting the fire.
- Put the fire out if winds pick up or the weather changes. Use common sense. Don't wait for the fire department to tell you that it has become unsafe to burn. Most fires get out of control during sudden wind changes.
- If the fire gets out of control, call the fire local department right away to prevent personal injury and property damage.
- You could be held liable for firefighting costs, as well as face fines or jail time, if you burn illegally or allow a fire to get out of control (see M.G.L. c.48, s.13).

What times are best for open burning?

You can help prevent wild land fires by burning early in the season. Wet and snowy winter conditions help hinder the rapid spread of fire on or under the ground.

Changing weather conditions and increased fire danger in spring can lead to many days when open burning is not allowed.

April is usually the worst month for brush fires. When snow recedes, but before new growth emerges, last year's dead grass, leaves and wood are dangerous tinder. Winds also tend to be strong and unpredictable in April.

What are the alternatives to open burning?

While still allowed in most Massachusetts towns and cities, open burning has disadvantages.

The combustion process releases carbon dioxide, other gases, and solid substances directly into the air. This can make it difficult for people with respiratory problems to breathe. It can also cause smoke and odor nuisance conditions for neighbors.

Disposing of natural materials is never as good for the environment as recycling them. Ask your public works or solid waste department if your community chips or composts natural debris into landscaping material.

What about fire pits?

Fire pits have become popular in recent years. But unless they are being used primarily for cooking, they are technically subject to the MassDEP open burning regulation. If you do use a fire pit for cooking, the fire must be:

- Kept to a reasonable size and primarily used for cooking
- Located away from combustible materials
- Contained in a non-flammable enclosure, and
- Tended by someone who is 18 years of age or older.

Remember to burn only clean, dry firewood. This will minimize the amount of smoke leaving your property and affecting neighbors. Smoke may not cause a nuisance to others. If it does, you will be required to extinguish the fire. You may not burn trash, refuse or similar materials.

MA General Law Chapter 48 Section 13 – Excerpt

Persons eighteen years of age or older may, without a permit, set, maintain or increase a reasonable fire for the purpose of cooking, upon sandy or gravelly land free from living or dead vegetation or upon sandy or rocky beaches bordering on tidewater, if the fire is enclosed within rocks, metal or other nonflammable material. Permission must be obtained from property owner to have a fire.

Bon fires are never acceptable. Fires on Town owned property and beaches are prohibited.