

For Immediate Release – County of Berks – Press Release

Berks County Activates a County-wide Burn Ban for 30 Days

Reading, PA — 10/31/2024 — The County of Berks has initiated a ban on open burning within the county that takes effect at 6 pm on November 2, 2024. The ban disallows the burning of garbage, leaves, grass, twigs, litter, paper, vegetative matter involved with land clearing, or any sort of debris out-of-doors, either in a burn barrel or on the ground. The county-issued burn ban includes exceptions for normal Agricultural Operations and Agricultural-related Business Operations.

The ban does not cover the responsible use of propane or gas stoves, charcoal briquette grills, or tobacco in any form. Campfires are allowed in the fire rings that confine and contain the campfire in a designated state, federal, or Department of Environmental Protection licensed campground. Be aware that a separate statewide ban could affect these activities.

The County of Berks activated the ban following a request from Richard J. Hartlieb, Jr., District Forester with William Penn State Forest. According to Hartlieb, the recommendation is “made for the protection of life and property and is supported by 20 Fire Chiefs within Berks County.” Nearly two dozen Berks municipalities have instituted their own burn bans recently. Lebanon, Chester, and Bucks Counties have all already implemented county-wide burn bans.

The request was made due to the existing dry and dangerous burning conditions throughout the County and an overall absence of rainfall since late September. The combination of those conditions creates a great risk of fire that would require a soaking rain to alleviate the danger. The current, long-range weather forecast does not indicate a great probability of soaking rain in the coming weeks.

Violations to the ban are enforceable by law enforcement and are a summary offense with progressive fines for repeated violations.

During the Berks County Board of Commissioners regular meeting on October 31, the Board amended the existing burn ban resolution to include a new exemption for Agricultural-related Business Operations.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Christian Leinbach notes that the new language in the resolution should alleviate some of the difficulties to Agriculture-related businesses that arose following the last burn ban in April 2023. “Farms and businesses within the agriculture industry saw some consequences of the 2023 ban that might have led to threats to community health if not addressed,” Leinbach said. “I would stress that even though there is an exemption to the burn ban for normal Agricultural Operations and Agricultural-related Business Operations, people should use common sense and consider the safety of people and property before all else.”

Commissioner Michael Rivera reminds county residents to be cautious when using backyard grills that are still allowed under the ban.

Commissioner Dante Santoni said that the governor could issue a statewide ban on burning that would have broader impact on activities than the county ban does.

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For more information (**media only**):
Jonathan Heintzman, Public Relations Officer
Office: 610-478-6136 x6112
Cell: 610-507-0063
Email: jheintzman@berkspa.gov