

DEC Reminds New Yorkers That Residential Brush Burning is Prohibited Until May 15

Burn Ban Reduces Wildfire Risks, Protect Lives and Property

With the start of spring and warmer temperatures expected, the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reminds New Yorkers that residential brush burning in towns with less than 20,000 residents is prohibited in the state through May 14.

"Along with the milder temperatures that come with spring, the risk for wildfires also increases," DEC Commissioner Joe Martens said. "New York prohibits residential burning during the high-risk fire season to reduce the number of wildfires and protect people, property and natural resources. Since being enacted in 2009, the ban has been very effective in reducing the number of wildfires, and we want people to be aware that they need to put safety first."

Open burning of debris is the largest single cause of spring wildfires in the state. When temperatures are warmer and grasses and leaves dry out, wildfires can start and spread easily and be further fueled by winds and the lack of green vegetation.

New York has had strict restrictions on open burning since 2009 to help prevent wildfires and reduce emissions. The regulations allow residential brush fires in towns during most of the year, but prohibit such burning in spring months - March 16 through May 15 - when most wildfires occur. Campfires using charcoal or untreated wood are allowed, but people should never leave such fires unattended and must extinguish them. Burning garbage or leaves is prohibited year-round.

In the five-year period since the ban was enacted, the average number of spring fires per year decreased by 43.2 percent, from 3,297 in 2009 to 1,425 in 2014.

Violators of the open burning state regulation are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for a first offense. To report

environmental law violations call 1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267) or [report online](#) on DEC's website.

Some towns, primarily in and around the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park, are designated "fire towns," and open burning is prohibited year-round in these municipalities unless an individual or group has a written permit from DEC. To find out whether a municipality is designated a "fire town" or to obtain a permit, contact the appropriate DEC regional office. A list of [regional offices](#) is available on DEC's website.