



## All About Fire Permits

*The question we should always ask here in the North Lake area is: "Do I need a permit to have my fire?" The answer is always: "It depends."*

There are several types of legal fires, including Campfire-Warming-Cooking-Ceremonial-Aesthetic fires, Debris fires, Agricultural and Hazard Reduction fires. Household or other trash fires are NEVER legal in our area. No incinerators, trash piles, or any other type of burning of non-vegetative material are allowed with one exception: burn barrels may be used to burn non-glossy paper and cardboard in addition to vegetative material (see the NCUAQMD website.)

In severe summer fire season conditions, the USFS and CALFIRE may ban ALL burning, even if you have a Campfire or AQMD permit. In this case, NO fires will be allowed. Violations of a fire ban can be cited and come with stiff penalties. Sometimes the USFS will ban ALL flame above or below certain altitudes for the same reason.

The wildfire "Fire Season" in our area normally starts May 1. Permit requirements change when Fire Season begins. In a typical year, the complete ban on Debris burning is usually around the end of June when the weather turns hot and fuels are drying out. Fire Season normally ends around the end of October. Fire Season dates can vary due to early or late rains, a particularly wet or dry winter, and such weather-related conditions.

### **Campfire/Warming/Cooking/Ceremonial/Aesthetic Fires**

Campfires are for the enjoyment of the outdoors. Whether you are camping, or just hanging out in your own back yard, you may usually have a "warming fire" for the cool evenings or cooking your dinner. However, there are considerations and rules that you must follow and will be enforced by the USFS, BLM, CALFIRE and your local fire departments. "Campfire" means a fire that is used for cooking, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes. This includes fires contained within outdoor fireplaces and enclosed stoves with flues or chimneys, stoves using jellied, liquid, solid, or gaseous fuels, portable barbecue pits and braziers, or space-heating devices that are used outside any structure, mobile home, or living accommodation mounted on a motor vehicle. "Campfire" does not include portable lanterns designed to emit light resulting from a combustion process. (CA PRC § 4103.5.) Some of the rules are:

- Clear all flammable material away from the fire's edge 5 feet in all directions to prevent escape of the fire.
- Have a shovel available *at the campfire site* for preparing and extinguishing campfires.
- Have water available *at the campfire site* to immediately extinguish any escaped embers and the campfire itself. (A full 5-gallon bucket is recommended.)
- Have a responsible adult *in attendance at all times*.
- Extinguish campfires with water, using the drown, stir, and feel method.
- The fire size must be "reasonable": a large bonfire won't be considered reasonable and you will be required to extinguish it. 2' by 2' is the recommended maximum size.

Permit requirements for Campfires vary depending on where you build the fire. In general, you are required to have a current California Campfire Permit *in your possession* to have a Campfire outside of designated campgrounds. These free permits are valid for the entire calendar year. A PDF of the permit on your electronic device at the site available for inspection is acceptable proof of a valid permit. See the first item below under Resources and Additional Information for information about obtaining your free permit online.

1. You may have ONE of these fires on *your own private property* without a permit. The owner must be present on the property and be responsible for the fire.
2. You may have a Campfire on someone else's private property. However, you must have *written permission* from the landowner unless the landowner has established an area for camping and posted permission for its use (*e.g.*, KOA.) (CA PRC § 4433)
3. You may have a Campfire on public land. You must have a current California Campfire Permit in your possession if you are not in a developed campground. Note that if you find a campfire ring at a site in the Wilderness, this does not count as a "developed campground" and a California Campfire Permit is required. Campfires are allowed in:
  - a. Developed campgrounds. Campsites normally have preexisting campfire rings, and you must keep your Campfire in these rings. It is not allowed to move the fire ring or construct another one. (36 CFR 261.16b)
  - b. Outside developed campgrounds. In general, Campfires are allowed, but camping rules must be followed. (See the Shasta-Trinity Forest Frequently Asked Questions link below.) For example, you must be at least ¼ mile away from designated campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, private property, and state highways; and at least 200' from springs, water, meadows, trails and roads.
  - c. In the Trinity Alps Wilderness (except for published permanent ban areas, such as in the Canyon Creek/Stuart Fork area.) Until the USFS issues seasonal restrictions on flame in the Wilderness, you may have a Campfire, backpacking stove, camp stove, or burner. You are to use dead and down wood for Campfires. Do not cut trees, snags or boughs, and make sure your Campfire is completely extinguished. See the rules on your required Wilderness Permit.

Note that typically the USFS suspends permission for campfires outside "designated camp sites" with pre-existing fire rings by the middle of Fire Season. The suspension will be issued as a "Forest Order." The order usually contains an exception for Campfires within 10' of the water's edge of Trinity Lake and 50' away from any flammable vegetation. These "exception" Campfires are still restricted by the Campfire permit (*e.g.*, 2' x 2', no bonfires). This 10' rule normally applies only during fire restrictions.

## **Debris Burn Piles**

It is permissible to burn "yard debris." The North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (AQMD,) along with CALFIRE, has authority over non-Campfire burning. The material that may be burned "shall include only dry natural vegetation grown on the premises that is reasonably free of dirt, soil and visible surface moisture." Trash and other combustible items are not permissible, except that in our area, you may burn non-glossy paper and cardboard, as well as vegetative material, in a burn barrel with an AQMD permit. The AQMD web page cited below,

as well as the AQMD permits themselves, list many examples of disallowed items, including household trash and business waste products.

In order to burn debris, an annual AQMD permit is required. These permits generally come in two types: Standard and Non-standard. These permits have fees associated with them depending on the size of the burn operation. See the AQMD web site for fee information. Note that all of the North Lake area is within Zone 3 (above 2,000') for the AQMD application. Permits require at least a 10' area clear of all flammable material around the burn pile. Debris burning is not allowed on public property unless a special permit has been issued.

Before burning any size of debris pile, you must call the AQMD at 1-866-BURN-DAY (1-866-287-6329) to determine if burning is allowed in Zone 3 on that day.

**Standard Burn Permits** allow one burn pile at a time no larger than 4' by 4'. These fires are sometimes called "door yard" fires, and there must be a residence on the property. The fire may be continuously fed with additional material, but must remain within the 4' by 4' space. This fire must be "dead out" before another 4' by 4' fire is ignited at a different spot. Conditions of approval are listed in the permit. These conditions include a 10' clear area around the fire with no flammable material, adequate water (*e.g.*, at least 5 gallons) at the site along with an additional water source, and constant presence of a responsible adult until the fire is "dead out." Standard Burn operations are allowed between 6 a.m. and one hour before sunset until May 1, thereafter 6 a.m. until 12:00 noon. No additional CALFIRE permits are required – the CALFIRE requirements are built into the AQMD permit.

**Non-standard Burn Permits** allow one burn pile at a time up to 10' by 10' on the premises. These permits require a 10' clear perimeter with no flammable material, at least 5 gallons of water plus another water source, and a constant adult presence. The fee associated with this permit is dependent on the total amount of material to be burned, the smallest amount limiting the operation to no more than one acre of material. In Fire Season, Non-standard burning will require a CALFIRE LE-5 (no fee) permit. This may require a site visit by a CALFIRE representative to inspect the site. The LE-5 will be valid for the day of the burn, with perhaps a little leeway depending on the season and fire conditions. In general, Non-standard Burning operations may be conducted from 6 a.m. until one hour before sunset outside Fire Season. In Fire Season, CALFIRE will likely require burning to end by 12:00 noon, but may extend the hours for a specific LE-5 permit.

## Resources and Additional Information

CALFIRE Campfire Permits information page and link to online permit training and application [http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/communications\\_firesafety\\_camping\\_campfirepermits](http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/communications_firesafety_camping_campfirepermits)

North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District permit information page with links to online permit applications (See Burn Permits in the left-side menu): <http://www.ncuagmd.org>

CALFIRE Campfire Safety information page <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Campfire-Safety/>

USFS Shasta-Trinity Frequently Asked Questions information page detailing camping outside established campgrounds <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/stnf/home/?cid=FSEPRD573399>