



Enacting a Statewide Burn Ban is Important for Protecting Iowans' Health

While two-thirds of Iowa's cities have banned open burning, one-third of Iowa's cities still permit residents to burn trash within city limits. Open burning emits numerous air pollutants that threaten human health, including fine particulate matter. Fine particulate matter concentrations in much of Eastern Iowa are near to or exceeding the Clean Air Act's fine particulate matter standards. By decreasing fine particulate matter concentrations in Iowa, we can decrease rates of asthma, bronchitis, and heart attacks.

The Iowa Environmental Council supports a statewide ban on burning trash within city limits.

Enacting a statewide burn ban will protect Iowans – especially young children, the elderly, and those with respiratory and heart conditions – from the air pollutants emitted when neighbors burn trash within city limits.

Enacting this burn ban is one important step Iowa can take to reduce fine particulate matter concentrations and help ensure that Iowa's fine particulate matter concentrations remain within the Clean Air Act's fine particulate matter

What happens when Iowans burn trash?*

Magazines & catalogs – Dioxins are emitted. Dioxins may be the most toxic manmade compounds. They cause and contribute to skin disease, reproductive and developmental harm, liver damage, and cancer. Burning styrofoam cups and plates, PVC pipes, and plastic milk jugs also emits dioxins.

Wood (treated with preservatives) – If wood was treated prior to 2004, the wood contains arsenic and poisonous smoke is emitted.

Nylon carpet – Formaldehyde is emitted. Formaldehyde can cause nausea, respiratory problems, skin inflammation, and eye irritation.

Leaves & branches – Fine particulate matter is emitted. Fine particulate matter can increase rates of asthma, bronchitis, and heart attacks. All combustion emits some fine particulate matter.

Asphalt shingles – PAHs, a carcinogen, is emitted.

* Kralicek, Mindy. (November 2008) "What Local Officials Need to Know About Burning Trash and Leaves."