



## PSA

**Date:** April 9, 2020  
**To:** All Media  
**From:** Stephanie Krell, PIO Unified Command Team  
**Subject:** **Refrain from outdoor burning**

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State agencies ask Oregonians to voluntarily refrain from outdoor burning while communities respond to COVID-19 - 04/03/20

(SALEM, Ore.) — In response to the "Stay Home, Save Lives" Executive Order to reduce the effects of the COVID-19 virus, a coalition of Oregon state agencies are asking Oregonians to voluntarily refrain from conducting outdoor burning.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office (OSFM), Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) recognize that many Oregonians use fire as a necessary tool to manage their lands, including industrial forest landowners, farmers, small woodland owners, and rural residents. However, it's important to weigh possible effects on the wider community before choosing to burn. Please be a good neighbor. Smoke from fires during the current pandemic may result in the following negative consequences for the public and first responders:

- Smoke inhalation can cause upper respiratory symptoms, which could be incorrectly attributed to COVID-19, leading to unnecessary testing or self-isolation.
- Exposure to smoke and other forms of air pollution can increase the risk of contracting infectious respiratory disease such as COVID-19, increase the severity of

existing respiratory infections, and worsen underlying chronic respiratory conditions.

- There is a severe shortage of personal protective equipment to reduce smoke exposure at this time.
- First responders and other emergency services are operating at a reduced capacity and have limited resources to respond to out-of-control burns.

COVID-19 affects the respiratory system. Fever, cough and difficulty breathing are the most common symptoms. While some people with COVID-19 are hospitalized, most patients recover at home, where smoke from a nearby outdoor burn could worsen their condition. To avoid additional health impacts, all people in Oregon are asked to voluntarily refrain from conducting outdoor burning activities until further notice.

Burning that can be delayed includes:

- Debris burning around one's property
- Burn barrels
- Industrial burning
- Slash and forest burning
- Agricultural burning that would impact neighbors and can be delayed

Local officials may already have prohibited outdoor burning in your area. If you must conduct outdoor burning, please first check with your local fire agency to see if outdoor burning is still allowed. If it is, please follow local regulations for the applicable jurisdiction where you will be burning, as well as the best burn practices, which can be found on the website of the [Office of the State Fire Marshall](#).

DEQ, ODF, OSFM, and ODA encourage the public to use the following alternatives to burning when available:

- Recycle paper products when possible
- Compost or chip yard debris on site
- Haul to a yard debris composting or recycling site
- Reuse old lumber

For more information, visit:

ODF - <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/Fire/pages/Burn.aspx>

DEQ - <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/aq/Pages/Burning.aspx>

ODA - <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/NaturalResources/Pages/Burning.aspx>

OHA COVID-19 website - <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>

This is a rapidly evolving situation. The latest COVID-19 response and protocols information is available at the [Oregon Health Authority | COVID 19 Updates](#) webpage. Additional information can be found on the [CDC](#) website.

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