



## **Banning Open Burning**

The Iowa Chapter supports legislation that would ban open burning of garbage and residential yard waste in municipalities. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) estimates that at least 180 municipalities allow burning of trash. Even more municipalities allow burning of leaves and yard waste.<sup>1</sup>

The Iowa Chapter supports state-wide legislation to ban the burning of garbage and residential yard waste. Currently, local city councils are codifying and implementing the garbage and yard waste burn bans. For those unincorporated areas in Iowa, the county's Board of Supervisors is responsible for codifying and implementing burn bans.

Alternatives to burning garbage and residential yard waste include recycling, composting yard waste and vegetable scraps, using leaves as mulch around shrubs and plants and disposing of non-recyclable garbage at a landfill.

### **Harmful effects of smoke**

The smoke emitted from burning garbage can contain poisons, toxins and potent chemicals, including dioxin, carbon monoxide, heavy metals and chlorine. Smoke is also made up of microscopic particles of soot, a form of particulate matter.

Smoke contributes to haze, reduced visibility and reduced air quality. Smoke is also a nuisance to folks who want to enjoy their homes without smelling and breathing smoke from burning garbage and yard waste.

Equally significant is the threat to Iowans' health and the medical costs related to exposure to smoke. Soot particles can be drawn deeply into the lungs. The particles can remain in the lungs for long periods of time, leading to wheezing, chest pain and shortness of breath. Inhalation of the smoke can cause irritation to the nasal lining and lungs and can cause asthma attacks. Smoke can be very serious to individuals with lung and heart disease and to children.

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<sup>1</sup> "Implementing the PM2.5 Ambient Air Quality Standard in the State of Iowa, Report to the Governor and General Assembly," Iowa Department of Natural Resources, December 30, 2010, revised January 3, 2011, page 17.

## **What can I do?**

- Support a state-wide ban on the burning of garbage and residential yard waste.
- Until the Iowa Legislature implements a burn ban, ask your city council or Board of Supervisors to ban on the burning of garbage and residential yard waste.
- Recycle. Materials that can be recycled include metals, plastics and paper and electronics. Check with your local landfill to determine if there are other items that can be recycled.
- Compost yard waste and vegetable scraps.
- Use leaves as mulch around shrubs and plants.
- Dispose of non-recyclable garbage at a landfill; do not burn it.

## **Sources**

“Implementing the PM2.5 Ambient Air Quality Standard in the State of Iowa, Report to the Governor and General Assembly,” Iowa Department of Natural Resources, December 30, 2010, revised January 3, 2011

[www.iowadnr.gov/idnr/Environment/AirQuality/OpenBurning.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/idnr/Environment/AirQuality/OpenBurning.aspx)