

2015 Burn Permit Information

Ravalli County has a new Burn Permit program. The following Question and Answer information will address any questions you may have about how burn permits are acquired and activated along with explaining how these changes will affect you as a burn permit holder.

Why do we issue permits?

- To limit the amount of time volunteer firefighters spend responding to non-emergency calls and allow them to focus on true emergencies.
- To prevent unnecessary emergency response of our Fire Departments that put them at greater risk for potential accidents.
- To limit the number of calls into our 911 Center so that Dispatchers can direct their efforts to your true emergencies.
- To track the locations of all approved burns in Ravalli County so that Dispatchers can more easily determine whether a smoke plume/fire is an emergency, such as a wildfire or structure fire. By tracking approved burns the Fire Department may not have to be dispatched each time smoke/fire is reported.
- To handle the volume of burn activity in Ravalli County. In 2014, the Ravalli County 911 Center received more than 15,000 burn notification calls. Our 911 Center cannot handle such volume of non-emergency calls without interfering with true emergency incidents.
- To prevent delays for burn permit holders wanting to activate a permit.
- To utilize technology to make the process of issuing permits, activating permits and tracking burn locations more efficient and cost effective for Ravalli County.
- To provide our 911 Center with more tools to assist when determining if a report of smoke/fire is a controlled burn or a true emergency.
- To allow Ravalli County residents the ability to obtain and activate burn permits 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

What is the cost now for my burn permit?

- The cost to obtain a 2015 burn permit is free. This will provide a full year to analyze the cost of the permit system.

How do I obtain a burn permit?

- Beginning February 15th, 2015 go online at <http://www.BurnPermits.mt.gov> and choose Ravalli County from the menu. Burning does not start until March 1st, 2015 but we will begin issuing permits on February 15th.
- Contact your local fire department for the hours that they will be issuing burn permits; generally on Saturdays. Or you can obtain a permit by visiting the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office reception desk Monday through Friday, 9am to 4pm.

How do I activate my burn permit?

- Online at <http://www.BurnPermits.mt.gov>; click on activate burn permit, enter your burn permit number and follow the remaining steps.
- Or by calling our automated phone line at 1-866-212-6318– This phone number is only for activating existing burn permits.
- Please note, when activating a burn permit it is only active for a single day. Should you wish to burn for consecutive days you must reactivate your permit for each day you intend to burn.
- When entering a start and stop time for your burn, it is important to be as accurate as possible to avoid potential deployment of fire department personnel.

What responsibilities am I assuming when I light my burn?

- You must have enough water, hand tools/equipment, and people to keep your fire under control.
- If you do not activate your permit before burning, the 911 Center will be unaware that your fire is a controlled burn, and the Fire Department and Law Enforcement may respond to your fire even though it is under control.
- If the fire escapes your control, you may be cited and fined, as well as having to pay the cost of suppression and any damage caused to someone else's property.
- If you have a cell phone, please enter the cell number on your burn permit and keep your cell phone with you when you burn. The 911 Center can contact you to determine if your fire has become uncontrollable.

What are the possible fines?

- If a person burns without having a permit or for violating rules of a permit they do have, such as failing to activate it as required, violations can be charged under several laws.
- MCA 7-33-2205 & 2206 deals with the fire season and burn violations. Violations under those codes are a misdemeanor with fines up to \$500 and/or 6 months in jail.
- If a person burns in a manner that is unsafe, damages property belonging to another, or places anyone in danger of injury or death, the person may be charged with Negligent Arson, MCA 45-6-102, which may consist of a misdemeanor or a felony, depending on the circumstances.
- Misdemeanor charges can cost up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail. Felony charges can cost up to \$50,000 and/or up to 10 years in prison. In all cases, restitution can be ordered separately from the criminal fine. Restitution may include but is not limited to paying damages to other property owners and paying for the firefighting resources.

When can I legally burn?

- The burning season begins March 1st and ends November 30th. Burn Permits will be available beginning February 15th, 2015.
- Due to weather or other applicable conditions, burning may be closed on any given day. If burning is closed you are prohibited from burning in Ravalli County. When burning is closed, the website and automated phone system will prevent you from activating your permit.

NOTE – From October 1st to November 30th you are also required to check the air quality for your area prior to burning. You may do so by calling the Ventilation Hotline at (406) 444-3490 or 800-225-6779 on the weekends.

Where can I legally burn?

- Ravalli County – Burning is allowed on private property.
- Hamilton City limits – Burning is strictly prohibited.
- Government Agencies – All agencies will be required to obtain a burning permit.

Recreational Fires

Warming and cooking fires are allowed in Ravalli County if no county burning resolutions are in place. Such recreational fires must measure less than 48 inches in diameter, be surrounded by a nonflammable structure and an extinguishing source must be available. Campfires cannot be left unattended and must be completely extinguished (MCA 76-13-123).

Who can I call if I still have questions?

- Lt. Zae Hudson (Ravalli County Sheriff's Office) 375-4020
- Ravalli County 911 Center 363-3033
- Contact your local Fire Chief

For more information, please visit <http://www.BurnPermits.mt.gov>