

2019 Ravalli County Burn Permit Information

Ravalli County has had a Burn Permit program since 2015. Ravalli County Burn Permits are free for 2019. If you have had a past Ravalli County Burn Permit, please renew that permit. It costs our taxpayers \$3 to issue or renew a burn permit. Please help us keep our burn permits free of cost by obtaining or renewing one permit per year. If you have questions on the Burn Permit program, please contact the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office (375-4060), Lt. Zae Hudson (375-4020) or your local Fire Chief.

Why do we need burning permits?

- To limit the amount of time volunteer firefighters spend responding to non-emergency calls and allowing them to focus on real emergencies.
- To prevent unnecessary emergency response from our Fire Departments that puts them at greater risk for potential accidents.
- To limit the number of calls into our 911 Center so that our Communications Specialist can focus on true emergencies.
- We track the locations of all activated burn permits in Ravalli County, so our Communications Specialist may determine whether a smoke plume or reported fire is an emergency (such as a wildfire or structure fire) or a controlled burn.
- To handle the volume of burn calls coming into the 911 Center. In 2018, Ravalli County issued 7,148 Burn Permits and had 20,572 burn permit activations, which were all completed via the internet or the automated phone line. This is 27,720 calls that did not interrupt emergency phone calls coming into our 911 Center.
- To utilize technology to make the process of issuing permits, activating permits and tracking burn locations in Ravalli County in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

How do I obtain or renew a burn permit?

- Go online at <http://www.BurnPermits.mt.gov> and choose Ravalli County from the menu. Choose Obtain a Permit or Renew a Permit and then follow the menu instructions.
- Contact your local fire department for the hours that they will be issuing burn permits; generally on Saturdays at the beginning of the burn season.
- Visit the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.
- If you lose your permit number, you can contact our Sheriff's Office or non-emergency Communications Center and we will assist you in researching your old permit number.

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 the automated phone line at 1-866-212-6318. This phone number is only for activating existing burn permits and costs Ravalli County 15 cents per minute.
- Your burn permit it is only active for a single day (24 hour period). Should you wish to burn for consecutive days you must reactivate your permit for each day you intend to burn.

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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. 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. You also may be responsible for the cost of suppression and any damage to someone else's property. Burn Permits are required for all open burning with the exception of warming or cooking fires.
- If you have a cell phone, please enter the cell number on your burn permit application and keep your cell phone with you when you burn. The 911 Center can contact you to determine if your fire has become uncontrollable prior to sending Fire and Law Enforcement.

What are the possible fines?

- If a person burns without having a valid permit or for violating rules of a permit, 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, they 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 in January 2019.
- Burning may be closed on any day due to weather, air quality, or other conditions. If burning is closed you are prohibited from burning in Ravalli County. When burning is closed, the Burn Permit website and automated phone system will prevent you from activating your permit.

Where can I legally burn?

- Ravalli County – Burning is allowed on private property.
- Hamilton City limits – Burning is prohibited.
- Stevensville City limits – contact Stevensville City Hall for information.
- Darby City limits – contact the Darby City Hall for information.

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Recreational Fires

Warming and cooking fires are allowed in Ravalli County if no county burning resolutions are in place. 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).