

ROY COOPER
Governor

MARY PENNY KELLEY
Secretary

MICHAEL ABRACZINSKAS
Director



Open Burning at a Residence Hurricane Helene Specific Guidance

Due to the extremely large amount of storm debris caused by Hurricane Helene, many residents will turn to open burning as a means of disposal. Please limit open burning as much as possible because smoke can cause serious health problems and pollute the air.

Residential Open Burning (allowed by rules 15A NCAC 02D .1900):

Many counties, cities, and towns are providing free storm debris pick up for residents. As such, the North Carolina Division of Air Quality (DAQ) is encouraging residents to not open burn the material and allow the material to be picked up and disposed of by the municipality. DAQ reminds residents that burning of leaves, logs, stumps, tree branches, or yard trimmings, can only be conducted if the following conditions are met:

- the material burned originates on the premises of private residences and is burned on those premises and does not include material collected from multiple private residences and combined for burning;
- there are no public pickup services available;
- non-vegetative materials, such as household garbage or any other synthetic materials are not burned;
- the burning is initiated no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and no additional combustible material is added to the fire between 6:00 p.m. on one day and 8:00 a.m. on the following day;
- the burning does not create a nuisance;
- material is not burned when the North Carolina Forest Service or other government agencies have banned burning for that area; and
- material is not burned in a county that the DAQ or the Forsyth County Office of Environmental Assistance and Protection, has forecasted to be in an Air Quality Action Day Code "Orange" or above during the 24-hour time period covered by that Air Quality Action Day.

Campfires and fires used solely for outdoor cooking and other recreational purposes, ceremonial occasions, or for human warmth and comfort are not restricted to the time-of-day limitations. Information about the Air Quality Forecast or Action Days can be found by calling your [DAQ Regional Office](#) or at www.airquality.climate.ncsu.edu.

Open Burning Storm-Related Debris after Hurricane Helene (time limited):

Under the state of emergency, in order to dispose of material generated as a result of a natural disaster, permitting requirements for open burning storm-related debris can be waived. Recent legislation ([Session Law 2024-51, House Bill 149](#)) passed by the State of North Carolina states that the following storm-related debris are allowed to be burned from now until **March 31, 2025**:

- Any solid and engineered wood products
- Vegetative land-clearing debris
- Yard trash (solid waste consisting solely of vegetative matter resulting from landscaping maintenance)

The open burning of storm-related debris should be limited to Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The primary purpose of the open burning shall not be to dispose of synthetic materials or refuse or recovery of salvageable materials. Materials **NOT** allowed to be burned include inert debris including asphalt shingles, tar



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Air Quality
217 West Jones Street | 1641 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1641
919.707.8400

paper, insulation, drywall, concrete, bricks, glass, tires, wire, plastics, refuse, dangerous or hazardous materials. The open burning activity cannot violate federal law or cause an imminent threat to public health or safety.

Open burning of storm-related debris must comply with the following conditions:

- **Prevailing winds and roads:** The wind direction at the time that the burning is initiated and the wind direction as forecasted by the National Weather Service at the time that the burning is initiated are away from any area, including public roads within 250 feet of the burning as measured from the edge of the pavement or other roadway surface, which may be affected by smoke, ash, or other air pollutants from the burning.
- **Distances from structures:** Open burning shall be at least 500 feet from any dwelling, group of dwellings, or commercial or institutional establishment, or other occupied structure not located on the property where the burning is conducted. The DAQ may grant exceptions to the setback requirements if a signed, written statement waiving objections to the open burning is obtained before the burning begins from owners, tenants, or residents of each dwelling within 500 feet of the site.
- **Time:** Initial burning begins only between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and no combustible material is added to the fire from 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. the following day.
- **Restrictions:** Material is not burned when the North Carolina Forest Service or other government agencies have banned burning for that area. Material is not burned in a county that the DAQ or the Forsyth County Office of Environmental Assistance and Protection, has forecasted to be in an Air Quality Action Day Code "Orange" or above during the 24-hour time period covered by that Air Quality Action Day.

Contact information for DEQ Regional Offices and Local Air Programs



Regional Office	Main Phone Number
Asheville Regional Office	(828) 296-4500
Fayetteville Regional Office	(910) 433-3300
Mooresville Regional Office	(704) 235-2100
Raleigh Regional Office	(919) 791-4200
Washington Regional Office	(252) 948-3800
Wilmington Regional Office	(910) 796-7215
Winston-Salem Regional Office	(336) 776-9800

Three North Carolina counties — Buncombe, Forsyth and Mecklenburg — are served by local air programs.

County	Local Air Program	Main Phone Number
Buncombe	Asheville-Buncombe Air Quality Agency	(828) 250-6777
Forsyth	Forsyth County Office of Environmental Assistance & Protection	(336) 703-2440
Mecklenburg	Mecklenburg County Air Quality	(704) 336-5430



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality | Division of Air Quality
 217 West Jones Street | 1641 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1641
 919.707.8400