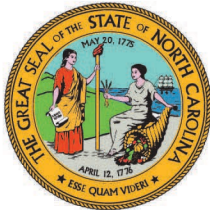


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MICHAEL ABRACZINSKAS
Director



NORTH CAROLINA
Environmental Quality

Open Burning at a Disaster Debris Site Hurricane Helene Specific Guidance

Temporary disaster debris sites are often established in order to stage, store, process, or dispose of debris generated by a major storm or natural disaster. The North Carolina Division of Waste Management (DWM) requires that all such temporary areas be approved before use. Due to the extremely large amount of storm debris caused by Hurricane Helene, many disaster debris sites 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. If using an Air Curtain Incinerator (ACI; also known as air curtain burners, trench or pit burners), please see specific guidance titled "*Burning Disaster Debris with an Air Curtain Incinerator.*"

Open Burning at Disaster Debris Sites (allowed by rules 15A NCAC 02D .1900):

Open burning for the disposal of vegetative material generated as a result of a natural disaster, including tornado, hurricane, or flood, is permissible if the North Carolina Division of Air Quality (DAQ) Regional Office Supervisor grants permission. The disaster debris site desiring to do the burning shall provide **written notification** to the DAQ before burning, including the following:

- Location of the open burning, with a map that shows that the location meets the 500 feet setback requirement from occupied structures (a 500-foot circle from the center of the burn pit location on an aerial or satellite map would be helpful)
- Date that open burning will start and expected end date
- Identification of the natural disaster (specify the storm and the State of Emergency Declaration)
- Description of the types and amounts of materials that are being burned
- Statement that there is no other practical method of disposal of the waste
- Signed waivers for any occupied structures within 500 feet of the burn pit location

Factors that the Regional Office Supervisor shall consider in granting permission for the open burning include type, amount, location of the burning, and nature of combustible substances. The Regional Office Supervisor shall not grant permission for the burning if the primary purpose of the fire is to dispose of synthetic materials or refuse or recovery of salvageable materials.

Open burning at DAQ approved disaster debris sites shall 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.



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

- **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.

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.

Burning construction debris could jeopardize FEMA reimbursement for debris collection and disposal if the debris contains hazardous waste (such as asbestos) or would result in an air quality violation.

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.

Materials **NOT** allowed to be burned include inert debris including asphalt shingles, tar 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 at disaster debris sites must comply with the conditions listed under the section for **Open Burning at Disaster Debris Sites (allowed by rules 15A NCAC 02D .1900)** above.

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

