



Compliance Advisory

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Compliance & Enforcement #2020-18 Issued: 11/6/2020

CHRISTMAS TREE BURNING AND DISPOSAL

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS ADVISORY?

Any person, municipality, corporation or other entity who disposes of Christmas trees by burning them outdoors, also known as open burning or a bonfire.

WHY IS DEP ISSUING THIS ADVISORY?

The open burning of refuse materials, including Christmas trees, is prohibited by the [New Jersey Administrative Code \(N.J.A.C.\) 7:27-2 et seq.](#) Planned Open Burn with approved permit(s) are allowed in situations noted in [N.J.A.C. 7:27-2 et seq.](#) for infested plant life, prescribed burning, emergencies, dangerous material, herbaceous plant life and hedgerows, orchard prunings and cullings, land clearing, and special permits for “substance or material that represent an imminent hazard to the public health, welfare, or safety.”

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Christmas tree bonfires are not safe. In contrast to safe wood burning, the wood is not dry and will create more smoke than otherwise necessary. Second, many Christmas trees still have some amount of decorations on them, including tinsel, lighting and missed ornaments; none of these items should ever be burned in an open fire as they can emit a variety of toxic releases.

The burning of wood emits small particles and potentially air toxins if not properly handled. For some people, even short-term exposure to wood smoke can aggravate lung or heart conditions. Children, teenagers, older adults and people with lung diseases such as asthma and COPD, or heart conditions are most susceptible to the effects of wood smoke.

In addition, burning trees releases carbon that has been bound up within its mass over its lifetime of growth. Carbon is released in the form of carbon dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas and contributes to climate change.

WHAT IS DEP DOING?

The Department will investigate all incidents of open burning to ensure compliance with the statutes and rules under [N.J.A.C. 7:27-2](#) et seq. Open burning of Christmas trees and/or other refuse as defined in [N.J.A.C. 7:27-2](#) et seq is prohibited by the rule. Violations of N.J.A.C. 7:27-2 et seq will be subject to enforcement actions that can include penalty assessments and fines.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

1. Do not conduct any open burning of refuse, including Christmas trees, at any time.

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2. Contact the DEP hotline at (877) WARN DEP (877-927-6337) to report possible violations of the State's Air Pollution Laws.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

Air Compliance and Enforcement, Northern Field Office For counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Warren, and Union.	973-656-4444 or AirCE-Northern@dep.nj.gov
Air Compliance and Enforcement, Central Field Office For counties: Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean.	609-292-3187 or AirCE-Central@dep.nj.gov
Air Compliance and Enforcement, Southern Field Office For counties: Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem.	856-614-3601 or AirCE-Southern@dep.nj.gov

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The Department suggests that Christmas trees be disposed of in more earth-friendly and sustainable ways such as chipping, mulching or dune construction. Please contact the following programs in the Department before chipping, mulching or constructing dunes with your collected Christmas trees.

1. Chipping and mulching may require approval from the Department's Bureau of Recycling and Hazardous Waste Management, (609) 984-3438.
2. Dune Construction may require prior approval from the Department's Division of Land Resource Protection at (609) 633-2289.

The following web sites can be accessed for additional information regarding this advisory:

- For general NJDEP information (Contact NJDEP): <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/dep/contactdep.pl>
- To comment on this advisory: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/survey.html>

In addition, DEP's Compliance and Enforcement Program is on [Facebook](#). Our goal is to provide our stakeholders and the regulated community a new way to connect and share relevant and useful compliance assistance topics, upcoming training, regulatory updates and recent advisories on a regular basis. Click on <https://www.facebook.com/NJDEPComplianceandEnforcement> and "Like" our page to receive up-to-date information as soon as it is available.

This advisory is intended to be a summary explanation of a DEP initiative. It does not include all potentially applicable requirements. If you have any questions related to compliance with this initiative, please contact the Enforcement numbers listed above.