

[<<Back](#)

Bend, Sisters ponder backyard burning bans

Posted: Nov 7, 2007 11:34 PM PST

Last Updated: Nov 8, 2007 07:49 AM PST



By Keisha Burns and Barney Lerten, KTVZ.COM

Smoke is evident in the air on top of Pilot Butte at this time of the year, but the Bend City Council is looking to make a change, and so are their counterparts in Redmond.

"The (Bend) council is looking at possibly banning open burning," said Frank Messina, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's air quality program manager in Bend, after a City Hall work session Wednesday evening

That is because such burning is creating a health concern for everyone, including those susceptible to respiratory problems. And new curbside yard-debris recycling options are making such moves feasible. At present, Bend has up to 20 "burn days" in the spring and 20 more in the fall, depending on weather conditions.

"Whenever material is burning, whether it's wood or leaves or garbage, it (puts) debris into the air. It creates reactive airways for people with chronic lung problems or asthma," said Shannon Dames, Deschutes County Health Department program manager.

Messina said, "The main issue during this season is getting calls of people who have respiratory problems, young children and even the elderly that are impacted from the smoke, burning and the wildfire season."

Bend Deputy Fire Marshal Gary Marshall said most of the calls come from nearby neighbors, complaining about the burns being a nuisance.

"We go out on a lot of nuisance calls, mainly because the neighbors are burning and the smoke drifts into their house, so it's most of a nuisance if anything."

A nuisance to those concerned they can't go outside anymore because of the smoke, but Messina said there are alternatives, which is a plus for everyone.

"The curbside pickup, 'Fire Free days' (free disposal at Knott Landfill) and the low cost to accepting material at the landfill, which they can make compost and hog fuel out of it," he said.

Some feel since we have alternative options, that it's time to ban debris burning, but Marshall says they're not looking for a total ban that involves recreational burning, such as cooking fires and barbecues.

"But moreso burning barrels, debris piles of leaves, needles, things that will continue to smoke for hours - those are the types of things council is looking to ban in city limits," he said.

But before that happens, Dames said staying indoors is best: "If you are part of vulnerable population the air is thick, you're suppose to stay in doors, close the window. It's a tough thing to deal with."

Meanwhile, the Sisters City Council conducts a public hearing Thursday night on a proposal to expand its current ban on garbage or waste material to include yard debris or field burning. Violations would constitute a minor misdemeanor, though a property owner eventually could be fined the cost of putting out a fire, including a lien against their property.

The council will review a draft ordinance, hold a hearing to take public testimony and possibly reach a decision by December. You can weigh in now at our KTVZ.COM poll on the home page.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2007 WorldNow and KTVZ. All Rights Reserved.
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

□