

Burning Down the House: How can your fire department do it properly?

Burning structures as part of a supervised fire training exercise is invaluable, but there are steps fire departments must take to minimize the potential impact to human health and the environment and ensure compliance with Ohio's rules.

For more realistic training, fire departments sometimes burn structures destined to be torn down, such as commercial buildings, residential homes and barns.

Ohio's open burning rules prohibit the burning of any structure without first obtaining an open burning permit from Ohio EPA. The intentional burning of any structure (or part of a structure) is considered demolition and requires a thorough inspection to determine the presence of asbestos and other hazardous materials.

Fire departments must provide notification, follow specific work practices and ensure proper disposal of regulated material.

Fire Training Instruction

The first step is to determine if the burn will be used for instructional purposes. To make that determination, Ohio EPA defers to the State Fire Marshal Division in the Ohio Department of Commerce. They indicate fire departments should follow the latest guidelines in the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) publication 1403: Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions, Chapter 4, Acquired Structures. If these instructions and guidelines are not followed, the burning is not considered fire training.

[Application to Conduct a Fire Training Exercise - Checklist](#)

All of the information on the fire training exercise checklist must be addressed to receive permission to conduct a fire training exercise on any structure. Forms 1 and 2 identified in the checklist are required to receive a burn permit. Remember that you must receive written permission before the fire training exercise can begin.

Asbestos Requirements and Considerations

Asbestos is not destroyed by fire, but the materials that bind the asbestos fibers together are. Once the binding materials are destroyed, the asbestos fibers are released and may be inhaled. It is vital that all asbestos-containing material be removed prior to burning the structure to protect the health of firefighters and citizens. The small residential exemption for asbestos abatement and demolition does not apply to a structure that is intentionally burned. Only an Ohio asbestos hazard evaluation specialist can certify whether asbestos is present.

If the structure (including residential homes) meets the requirements for a fire training exercise, it must be inspected by an Ohio asbestos hazard evaluation specialist. The fire department or building owner must secure an asbestos survey and hire a licensed asbestos specialist to remove any regulated asbestos-containing material, including Category I and Category II non-friable asbestos-containing material. Ohio EPA's Division of Air Pollution Control (DAPC) licenses asbestos specialists.



IMPORTANT

Burning solely for purposes of urban renewal or for inexpensive disposal is not considered fire training and would be a violation of Ohio's open burning rules, thereby subjecting the violator to enforcement action.

While some open burning requires only notification, open burning of a structure for fire training purposes requires an open burning permit.

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Ohio's regulations require that contractors provide a notification, conduct thorough inspections to determine the presence of asbestos, follow specific work practices, and ensure proper disposal of asbestos-containing material. Details, including forms and contact information, can be found at epa.ohio.gov/dapc/atu/asbestos.aspx.

Asbestos-containing material can include, but is not limited to:

- roofing shingles;
- drywall;
- siding;
- mastic (for instance, glue and adhesives);
- ceiling tiles;
- wall plaster and joint compounds;
- floor tiles;
- water and steam pipe wraps and insulating material;
- plaster;
- vermiculite insulation;
- furnace insulation and older types of furnace duct tape; and
- window glazing and caulking.

To ensure the health and safety of the community and to ensure the environment is not negatively impacted, you must remove all hazardous materials prior to the burn. If you have questions concerning specific materials that must be removed prior to the burn, contact your open burning inspector. These materials can include, but are not limited to:

- vinyl siding;
- asphalt shingles;
- batteries;
- stored chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, paints, glues, sealers, tars, photographic reagents;
- stored linoleum, plastics, rubber, tires or insulated wire;
- smoke alarms;
- fluorescent lights, ballasts and transformers;
- thermostats;
- electronic devices; and
- hazardous wastes.



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Open Burning Permit Requirements

Burning of any structure in Ohio is considered open burning and requires submittal of a written application for permission at least 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before the burn. Ohio EPA's open burning request form and the open burning contact list is located at epa.ohio.gov/dapc/general/openburning.aspx.

More Information

If you need help completing the form(s), contact the Office of Compliance Assistance and Pollution Prevention (OCAPP) at (800) 329-7518, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. For questions about the asbestos or open burning requirements, contact the Division of Air Pollution Control at (614) 644-2270 or find your local contact at epa.ohio.gov/dapc/general/openburning.aspx or epa.ohio.gov/dapc/atu/asbestos.aspx.

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Fire Training Exercise Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Form 1: <i>Ohio EPA Notification of Demolition and Renovation form</i> - for burning any structure (for instance, a house, barn or garage). This form certifies no regulated asbestos is present or all regulated asbestos including Category I and Category II non-friable asbestos-containing material will be removed prior to the burn. The notification must identify the licensed <i>Ohio Asbestos Hazard Evaluation Specialist</i> who conducted the survey. The form must be postmarked or hand-delivered (<u>not</u> faxed or emailed) 10 working days prior to the burn and/or any asbestos abatement activities.</p> <p>Note: This form is required any time a live fire is being set inside a structure, even for interior-only smoke training (room and content burns).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The <i>Notification of Demolition and Renovation</i> form is COMPLETE and APPROVABLE (for instance, all applicable lines are filled in and the form is signed by the fire department in charge of the training).</p> <p>Note: The 10-day waiting period does not start until the complete application is postmarked or hand-delivered to Ohio EPA or applicable local air agency.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Form 2: <i>Open Burning Permit Application for Fire Training Exercise</i>. This form requires submittal by the fire department at least 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays) before the burn.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>All hazardous materials that would endanger the health and safety of the firefighters, the public and the environment have been removed. (If you have questions concerning specific materials that must be removed prior to the burn, contact your open burning inspector.)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Asphalt shingles or other petroleum-based materials are NOT present. (Exceptions include interior/smoke training only where no part of the structure will be burned, when unsafe conditions prevent removal, or upon satisfactory demonstration that it is necessary to leave such items for specific training purposes. To leave asphalt shingles on the structure, however, you must first obtain approval from your open burning inspector.)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No vinyl siding is present on the structure's exterior. (Exceptions include interior/smoke training only where no part of the structure will be burned, when unsafe conditions prevent removal, or upon satisfactory demonstration that it is necessary to leave such items for specific training purposes. To leave vinyl siding on the structure, however, you must first obtain approval from your open burning inspector.)</p>