



Date: October 14, 2009

Contact: Sally Markos, 736-1056, ext. 217

Lane County Media: 09-11

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Open Burning Season Opens Thursday, October 15

After a two-week delay due to high fire danger, the open burning season opens Thursday, October 15, for most residents in Lane County. However, residents are reminded that burning is prohibited year-round within the city limits of Eugene, and is greatly restricted for residents of Springfield. In addition, residents are reminded LRAPA's open burning rules were amended in March, 2008 to address several inadequacies and better define some types of outdoor burning. The new rules further restrict burning in certain areas.

Among major changes, the new rules:

- * Bring Florence-area residents within fire protection by the Siuslaw Valley Fire & Rescue district under seasonal regulation,
- * Bring Hazeldell residents (outside Oakridge/Westfir) under seasonal regulations,
- * Change the fall open burning season start-date from October 15th to October 1st, unless delayed by extended fire season conditions,
- * Prohibit open burning within the Eugene/Springfield Urban Growth Boundary from November through February,
- * Provide exemptions for religious ceremonial fires, and
- * Clarify language around the use of recreational fires, including cooking fires, campfires, fire pits, patio wood-fired heaters and chimineas, and other similar devices.

“Generally, most residents who live outside the Urban Growth Boundary of Eugene and Springfield are allowed to burn under LRAPA rules,” said Sally Markos, of LRAPA. “However, some areas, such as Oakridge and the City of Florence, have enacted ordinances that further restrict burning.”

For this reason, LRAPA recommends residents call their local fire departments for information regarding restrictions on burning in their areas before they burn. Burning is restricted on days when pollution rises into the moderate category or weather conditions may cause a build up of fine particulate from smoke. Willamette Valley residents should always call LRAPA's open burning hotline, 726-3976, before burning to verify that burning is allowed on any given day. Coastal residents can call 997-1757 for daily outdoor burning advisories.

Residents who are allowed to burn are reminded that burning only woody yard debris generated on their own residential property is allowed, and that all fires must be out by sunset. A first offense violation of LRAPA's open burning rules may result in a \$500 fine.

(More)

“LRAPA wants to remind residents that although burning might be allowed in their area, smoke from open burning exposes individuals to harmful pollutants, including particulates and air toxics. Smoke can travel quite a distance and impact large areas. The agency asks residents to dispose of debris by composting, chipping, or recycling whenever possible to avoid exposing themselves and others to harmful emissions,” Markos said.

LRAPA receives numerous citizen complaints about backyard burning. Last year, LRAPA responded to almost 300 complaints about open burning and levied a number of fines for illegal burning. “People are becoming more aware of the health impacts from smoke and are less tolerant of open burning, even during the burning season. It’s a serious health concern for many people.” Markos said.

Residents can dispose of yard debris for a minimal charge at several collection depots, including Lane County transfer sites at Glenwood, Cottage Grove and Florence, Lane Forest Products (345-9085) and Rexus (342-1835).

Things residents can do to reduce impacts from open burning:

- * Keep piles covered and dry until ready to burn;
- * Burn only wood debris;
- * Use a chipper whenever possible, and burn only what is necessary; and
- * Burn well within the property line away from other homes.

Likewise, the Department of Forestry reminds residents to follow safety precautions to prevent backyard burn piles from escaping into wildfires. Residents are asked to:

- * Clear a trail around the burn pile down to mineral soil;
- * Keep a shovel and a supply of water handy at the site; and
- * Constantly attend the burn site until the fire is completely extinguished.

###