

## Article for 102815

The Burn Ban has been lifted!! If the number of phone calls, emails, and social media requests are any indication, we should see LOTS of smoke over Madison County in the few days and weeks. We've been under a burn ban since August 3<sup>rd</sup> – that's quite a few, long months when you have a pile of limbs, stumps, and debris just sitting there, waiting for the day when it can be burned! I'll bet some folks have piles of leaves starting to build up, too, or starting to cover the little green sprouts that are coming out, peaking through the brown dirt that we thought would never bear beautiful grass again!

Some of you may have already taken other actions to remove the piles you had ready to burn. What a fantastic idea! If you have a pile, have you considered whether there was another way to get rid of it besides burning? Is it something you can use as mulch or compost? Is it something that is recyclable or useful for someone else? Maybe it doesn't even need to be burned.

If it does, however, perhaps you really need to determine if you have adequately prepared for the burn. Do you have a plan for burning? Is it a management pile? Is it away from flammable fuels, buildings, or low-hanging limbs? Is it surrounded by grass? That might not be good. Perhaps you need to clear a line around your pile, so that it's less likely to spread. Are you burning heavy logs or stumps that could burn for quite a long time? Do you have time to stay with your fire from beginning to end? Is someone available to help should the fire go out of control? Do you have a water supply nearby with proper pressure? Is your pile positioned so that the smoke will not enter into an occupied building or across a roadway? Do you have both dry and wet debris piled together? That's not such a great idea. These are just a few questions to ask when planning to burn.

There are also laws that could come into play, especially if you are within city limits. You can check those out at [www.tceq.texas.gov](http://www.tceq.texas.gov).

The weather also plays a very important role. It is safest to burn a few days after a soaking rain or when the humidity is higher than 30%, with calm winds. Winds can cause branches, leaves and pine needles to dry out. Gusty winds can blow sparks into areas you don't want to burn. The wind direction can also become unpredictable when it's windy. Think about which direction the smoke will go.

With some serious planning and awareness, you can successfully burn your debris pile safely! Just remember that if you are concerned about safety and fear you can't adequately control it, don't wait! Put the fire out! Never leave the area before the fire is completely out, and Be Safe Out There!