

## Open Burning Bylaw Question and Answers

Q1. How does the bylaw **define a fire**?

A1. A fire is broken into 3 categories in order to develop specific guidelines for each type.

Those categories are;

- camp fire
- enclosed fire
- open air fire

Q2. Can I have a **camp fire** in my back yard?

A2. The bylaw permits back yard camp fires when the fire is limited to a specific size, is located certain distances from property lines and other combustible objects and meets other safety detailed criteria. No permit is required.

Q3. What if my backyard does not have quite enough room to meet the **camp fire setback** distances identified in the bylaw?

A3. The camp fire section of the bylaw has a provision that allows the fire chief to review the individual circumstances and where warranted, may permit smaller setbacks depending on those circumstances.

Q4. The fire department has been to our house before because of a neighbour complaining about the smoke. If my backyard camp fire meets all the size, distance and safety requirements will a **smoke complaint** still be valid?

A4. The bylaw includes a requirement that the camp fire smoke cannot “cause annoyance, irritation or interfere with the natural enjoyment of persons on adjacent properties”. The bylaw also has a requirement that only “clean dry wood or charcoal can be burned”. Smoke can always be a touchy issue and it is the expectation that camp fires using the fuel identified will be very limited in smoke production. The wind direction and speed must also be considered.

If the fire department is called to your location they will check the camp fire to see that it meets the bylaw. This also includes wind and smoke direction. When all the requirements are met including a normal fire with normal smoke generation on a normal night, the camp fire will be permitted to continue. A fire report with pictures will be completed noting the circumstances for our records.

Q5. I have a camper in a local **camp ground**. Our camp sites are close together and there is no way the setback distances can be met. Any smoke from a camp fire could interfere with my neighbours. Does this mean the fire department will extinguish my fire if a complaint is received?

A5. The bylaw has a special provision where authorized camp grounds exist. It exempts camp ground camp fires from the setback distances and the smoke disturbance component as long as the fire size is limited to 18” x 18” x 18”. No permit is required.

Q6. Why are **camp grounds** permitted to have smaller fires exempt from smoke complaints and the required setback distances?

A6. People expect to have camp fires in a camp ground and know that smoke is part of camping life. The maximum camp fire size was reduced recognizing that sites are close together. The camp grounds typically have a park ranger that patrols the park to ensure among other things that camp fires are properly maintained.

- Q7. I have a wood working shop in my garage. I usually burn the different sizes of wood scraps in a 45 gallon drum out in the back yard. Can I continue to do this?
- A7. The bylaw is very specific on the requirements for this type of burning container and is referenced under "**enclosed fires**". As long as the wood scraps are not covered with stain, varnish, paint or other coatings, they can still be used for burning. Other requirements include a mesh screen to help contain the larger embers that may be experienced with the volume of fire in this size container. Setback distances must also be met and when in question can be reviewed and sometimes reduced with fire chief approval.
- Q8. After fire administration has attended my residence and allowed me to have **smaller setback distances**, how will the fire crews know if they are called to a complaint? I don't want them to charge me under the bylaw for not meeting the setbacks.
- A8. Special setback exemptions are only determined by the full time fire administrative staff and are entered into the fire department property data base. The property owners that are given special setback exemptions will be provided with an official site plan drawing that identifies the agreed upon distance. The owner will be required to produce that plan for the attending fire fighting staff. They may confirm that the site plan has not changed.
- Q9. I have a large **farming operation** and sometimes require an open burn to dispose of roots and vegetation debris removed from the ditches. Will I still be permitted to burn this?
- A9. This type of fire is called an open air fire and will require approval before the burning can take place. The bylaw identifies specific pile sizes and safety requirements that must be met. Given the large open areas on farm property, larger burn piles may be permitted based on the material and circumstances.
- Q10. As a farmer I have always burnt off wheat stubble and other **farm vegetation** without notifying the fire department. Why is this required now?
- A10. Cell phones have become so popular that concerned citizens see a fire and call 911 to have fire services attend and check it out. By requesting an open burn permit before the burn, the fire department can confirm all the safety concerns and requirements are addressed. Your location, contact number, day and burn times will be forwarded to the fire dispatch center. If a call is received reporting the controlled burn on your property the dispatcher knows it is approved and does not normally require the fire service to attend.
- Q11. How do I get a **fire permit** and is there a cost?
- A11. Permits can be obtained by calling the Lakeshore Fire Department Administration Monday through Friday between 8:30 AM through 4:30 PM. Weekend permits can be requested during the regular work hours. Callers will be asked several questions to confirm location, time and other details to determine if the burn can be approved. There is no cost for the burn permit.
- Q12. I want to buy an **outdoor recreational heating device**. What types are allowed and is there specific set back distances?
- A12. Only outdoor heating devices that are ULC or CSA approved are acceptable provided that the owner's manual instructions are followed for proper operation and setback distances. This manual must be available for fire department review if required. No permit is required.

Q13. The bylaw talks about allowable fire sizes using phrases like “material to be burned” and “size of the burn area”. Does this mean the permitted flame heights or does it mean the wood pile size?

A13. The sizes referenced in the bylaw refer to the dimensions of the wood pile size.

Q14. Where can I get a copy of the burning bylaw?

A14. The bylaw can be found at [https://www.lakeshore.ca/en/municipal-services/applications-licences-and-permits-open-burning.aspx?\\_mid\\_=2713](https://www.lakeshore.ca/en/municipal-services/applications-licences-and-permits-open-burning.aspx?_mid_=2713)

or paper copies can be obtained through Town Hall or Fire Administration located in Belle River.