



# GEORGIA'S OUTDOOR BURN NOTIFICATION SYSTEM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

## CHANGES TO GEORGIA'S OUTDOOR BURN NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (SENATE BILL 119 – O.C.G.A. 12-6-90) - EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021

### **How has the burn notification law changed?**

GA code section 12-6-90 eliminates the need to notify the Georgia Forestry Commission when a person, firm, corporation or association intends to burn hand-piled vegetation/yard debris. Important fire prevention precautions for burners, however, were added.

### **If I don't have to call for permission, can I simply light the match?**

NO! The new law mandates the person burning take full responsibility for keeping their fire contained and is required to ensure FIVE SAFETY STANDARDS are followed.

Before you burn...**TAKE 5!**



### **What are the five safety standards and how will I remember them?**

Before you burn, "Take Five," and remember the acronym, "S-S-T-A-R." Each of the star's five points represents a burning safety standard:

- S Space** – Burn location must be no less than 25 feet from any woodlands, forestland or field that contains brush, grass or other flammable material.
- S Space** – Burn location must be no less than 50 feet from structures, which includes homes, outbuildings, sheds and barns.
- T Time** – Burning must take place between sunrise and sunset.
- A Attendance** – Person responsible must attend burning at all times until fire is completely extinguished and there is no risk for burning to escape control.
- R Reasonable Precautions** – Person responsible must take reasonable and necessary precautions to prevent fire escape or spread from the original location.

### **What constitutes "reasonable precautions?"**

Some examples include:

- Continuous pressurized water source on site, such as water hose. Buckets of water or hand-held sprayers do not meet legal requirements.
- Man-made or natural barrier to contain your fire such as bare soil, rocks, bricks or burn barrel.
- Hand tools or fire-containing equipment on site, such as rake, shovel, garden hoe, etc.
- Weather awareness to NWS red flag warnings, High Fire Danger designation of Class 4 or Class 5 days and other hazardous conditions, such as prolonged drought, low relative humidity or high winds, etc.



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### ***What about permits for silviculture, agriculture and land-clearing burns?***

Those are different and a permit IS required. Contact your local GFC county ranger. This includes permits for pine straw producers.

### ***Why was this law changed?***

Escaped leaf pile and yard debris burning is the leading cause of wildfires in Georgia. In an effort to reduce the number of unwanted fires and to protect Georgia's valuable forest resources, homes and structures, establishing best practice requirements when burning yard debris is a responsible way for homeowners and citizens to continue to burn.

### ***What am I allowed to burn?***

Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occurring yard debris. No household garbage or man-made refuse, and debris may not be transported from one location to another for burning.

### ***How do I determine if it's a good weather day to burn?***

Local weather is the primary consideration necessary for safe outdoor burning. Gather data on local wind speeds, relative humidity and the number of days without significant rainfall. Breezy, high, or gusty winds accompanied with low relative humidity and extended days without rain are recipes for wildfires. When winds are light, generally 10 mph or less, when relative humidity is above 35%, and when frequent rainfall has occurred at the location of the burning, the person responsible may make a decision to burn leaf piles and yard debris.

### ***What weather apps do you recommend for my mobile phone and computer?***

Local current and forecasted weather information is readily available through local media sources and regional and statewide weather forecasting agencies. Many local news and weather apps for mobile phones and computer are available. The Weather Channel provides smart phone apps that may prove to be helpful. In addition, the Georgia Forestry Commission provides comprehensive fire weather and fire danger information, which is readily available at: [GaTrees.org](http://GaTrees.org).

### ***Will Unlawful Burn Notices (UBNs) still be issued? Under what circumstances?***

Rangers at the local county unit who respond to wildfires determine whether an Unlawful Burn Notice must be issued. UBNs may be issued if wildfire results from a yard debris burn AND it is clear that the five required safety precautions have not been followed.

UBNs are issued whenever illegal materials are being burned, including household garbage, man-made materials, personal papers, corrugated boxes and pallets.

### ***What will the GFC do about smoke complaints?***

Safety is our primary concern and we will always respond to reports of wildfire. For smoke complaints we will ask if the fire has escaped or could cause imminent threat. It is illegal to burn after sunset. Local GFC rangers will determine what action to take on an individual basis.

### ***What if I don't have a lot of space between my fire and woodlands or a structure?***

It is illegal to light a debris pile if there is less than 50 feet between your fire and a structure or 25 feet between your fire and woodlands.

### ***Will there be a grace period for people to get used to these changes?***

The law goes into effect on July 1, 2021. A communication campaign is underway to help Georgians understand requirements of the new law and their responsibilities when burning. Visit [GaTrees.org](http://GaTrees.org) for complete details, including a how-to video, a copy of the legislation, and information about burning safety.

