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TO: Travis County ESD 5 Customers

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION BULLETIN 003**
Outdoor Burning Permit/Inspection Process and
Rules for Outdoor Burning

DATE: October 1, 2025

CREATED BY: Travis County ESD 5 Fire Code Official

Purpose:

The Fire Code Official for Travis County ESD 5 (TCESD5) has created this bulletin to assist applicants regarding permit and inspection requirements for outdoor burning within the District. This Information Bulletin incorporates the department's process for submitting applications to the fire code official, electronically through www.tcesd5permits.com and the subsequent inspection.

Code References:

2021 Fire Code of Travis County Emergency Services District 5 / Manchaca Fire Rescue, published by the ICC (Sections 105.3.34; 307.1-307.5); Travis County ESD 5 Ordinances 2025-08-14-01; 2025-08-14-02; 2025-09-11-01; TCEQ Rules for Outdoor Burning; Texas Clean Air Act.

FAQs:

When is a permit needed? A FREE permit for outdoor burning is needed anytime an outdoor fire exceeds 3 feet in width and 2 feet in height for anything other than a campfire, recreational, or ceremonial fire. The permit is good for one year and will be issued after the burn site is inspected by a fire inspector to ensure compliance with state law and the Fire Code of Travis County Emergency Services District 5.

What is the TCEQ definition of a structure containing sensitive receptors? A man-made structure utilized for human residence or business, the containment of livestock, or the housing of sensitive live vegetation.

Can I burn within 300 feet of a sensitive receptor? Burning can be done within 300 feet of a sensitive receptor **IF** the burning is done downwind of the sensitive receptor OR written approval is obtained from the occupants of the sensitive receptor prior to the outdoor burning. If wind direction changes during the burn, causing the smoke to carry to the sensitive receptor, then the pile must be extinguished or written approval must be immediately obtained.

Who authorizes outdoor burning in Texas? The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) authorizes burning in Texas through burning exceptions published in the Outdoor Burning Rules which are codified in the Texas Clean Air Act. Violations are criminal in nature, and range from Class C misdemeanors up to felony level offenses.

Why is a permit needed from Travis County ESD 5? A FREE permit is needed as the primary method of ensuring the burn site meets the requirements of the Texas Outdoor Burning Rules, and as the primary notification to the responding fire department (Manchaca Fire Rescue / TCESD5) that a burn is occurring within the District. The permit populates a dashboard at the fire department showing all the Active Outdoor Burning within the District.

Can I burn household (domestic) waste? Yes, but only if it is for a private residence holding three families or less. Waste cannot be taken or brought from any other property to be burned. Domestic waste is limited to kitchen garbage, untreated lumber (no construction debris), cardboard boxes, packaging, clothing, grass, leaves, and branch trimmings. The following items are always prohibited from being burned: tires, construction debris/treated lumber, furniture, carpet, electrical wire, appliances, other waste not generated from normal life in the residence. Burning of domestic waste is prohibited during a burn ban unless specific requirements are met.

Can I have a bonfire? Any ceremonial or recreational fire exceeding 3 feet in width and 2 feet in height is considered a bonfire. Bonfires require a permit and inspection by a fire inspector before being lit. Bonfires cannot be located within 100 feet of any structure or combustible material. Bonfires in a fire pit cannot be located within 50 feet of any structure or combustible material.

Are there special instructions for outdoor burning of branch trimmings, grasses, and leaves? Yes. In addition to the rules contained in the Outdoor Burning Rules, burn sites must be located at least 50 feet from any structure. Fires in approved containers with spark arrestors must be located not less than 15 feet from a structure.

What are the requirements for ceremonial, cooking, or recreational fires? These fires are limited to a maximum size of 3 feet wide x 2 feet in height. They do not require a permit. Fires shall not be conducted within 25 feet of a structure or combustible material.

Special Considerations:

What are the consequences of violations? Violations of the Texas Outdoor Burn Rules / Texas Clean Air Act range from Class C misdemeanors with fines of up to $500 per day to felony level offenses to include jail time and fines of thousands of dollars, depending on the violation. Also, if a person starts any outdoor burn and the fire gets out of control and extends to the property line and ignites another person's fence or structures, the person starting the fire can be arrested and charged with second degree felony arson and face additional criminal and civil penalties.

How to get your FREE one year permit for outdoor burning:

To obtain your FREE outdoor burning permit, which is good for one year, follow these instructions (plan in advance…the process can take 1-2 business days and is not done on weekends or holidays):

1) Visit www.tcesd5permits.com
2) Click the blue Login or Register button at top right corner
3) First time users must register with an email address. Once registered, check your email for a verification email for first time login.
4) Login using your email address and password you have setup.
5) Choose Apply for a New Operational Permit.
6) Select Open/Outdoor Burning
7) Complete the required information. Under property name, enter your last name and the word residence (i.e. Smith Residence).
8) As you start typing the street name, select the correct street from the auto-populated list. If you live on a newly constructed street and it does not appear, then just enter the street name.
9) Once you complete the submission, the fire inspector will call to schedule a site inspection within 1-2 business days of the submittal, sometimes, even the same day. Upon passing the inspection, the permit will be issued for one year.
10) The permit and inspection is good for a specific burn location on the property. If the burn location moves, a new permit and inspection is required using the same submittal process.

This policy is effective on the date of this bulletin and will remain in effect until further notice. Your cooperation in implementing this policy is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions on this policy, please call the TCESD5 Fire Code Official's office at 512-640-8273.

Summary:

This Information Bulletin is for informational purposes only.

Prepared by: Nathan Mendenhall, Risk Reduction Officer/TCESD 5 Fire Code Official