

Northeastern N.C. Counties Affected By Change In Permit Laws

"A Special Burning Permit is now required for burning windrows and piles of debris resulting from land clearing operations," according to State Forester H. J. Green. "The state's law regulating open burning was changed by the October session of the General Assembly and affects 22 eastern North Carolina counties which have concentrations of organic soil. The change was brought about because of the problems created by smoke from land clearing burning over the last few years. Chowan County is one of those affected by the new law. The new law, G.S. 113-60.22 requires that anyone intending to burn material in or within 500 feet of a wooded area at anytime during the day or night must first obtain a burning permit. Burning within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling does not require a permit as long as the material being burned is confined within an enclosure (such as a trash burner) or the burning is

done in a protected area and watched over by a person equipped with fire tools (like a charged water hose) and capable of controlling the fire. "This is a little different from the old law. If you need to burn off a field of grain stubble or some garden trimmings regardless of the time of day or night, you need to get a regular burning permit," stated Chowan County Forest Ranger Roger Spivey. The big change is related to debris (stumps, brush, or other flammable materials) resulting from land clearing operations on five or more continuous acres. "If a person intends to burn debris from land clearing on a tract that is five acres or larger in size, then he has to have a special burning permit. The whole idea of this special burning permit is to cut down on the amount of smoke and pollution in the air," Spivey said. "There are several things individuals doing land clearing can do to ensure that the debris burns faster

and cleaner," stated Dane Roten, Fire Control Senior Staff Forester with the N. C. Division of Forest Resources. "Foremost is to make sure that the material being windrowed or piled has little or no organic soil in it. It is the organic soil which causes so much of the smoke and creates problems for everyone." "Second, land clearing debris which is pushed into round piles will burn faster and hotter than windrows. More air gets to the fire, making the material burn more completely and thus gives off less smoke. It also takes less time for the same material in a windrow." "The third thing is to let the material cure for several months after it has been pushed up, preferably into round piles. It's a well known fact that dry wood will burn faster, hotter and give off less smoke than wood that is green and wet." Under the new law, there are some important guidelines which must be followed when burning debris from land clearing

- activities:
1. At the time the windrow or round pile is ignited, the winds must be blowing away from cities, towns, developments, major highways, and other populated areas.
 2. The windrows or round piles to be burned must be at least 1,000 feet from swellings or structures located in a predominately residential area.
 3. Dirt or organic soil on or in the material to be burned must be minimized and the material arranged to facilitate rapid burning.
 4. Burning is not allowed during stagnant air conditions or inversions, or when such conditions may occur during the duration of the burn.

5. No heavy oils, asphaltic materials, or items containing natural or synthetic rubber may be used to ignite or promote burning of windrows or round piles.
6. The initial burning may be started only between the hours of 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. No material may be added to the fire between the hours of 3 P.M. and 9 A.M. the following day. Debris burning from land clearing operations less than five acres in size does not require a special burning permit. However, a regular burning permit is still needed if the material to be burned is within 500 feet of a wooded area. "We will still have our network of permit agents who can issue the regular

burning permits. But the special permit for land clearing burning can only be issued by the county ranger. He will make a visual inspection of the windrows or piles to be burned and determine the amount of materials they contain, both burnable materials and organic soil," State Forester Green declared. "So anyone who intends to burn this type debris needs to contact the county ranger several days in advance. They can even contact him a month or more before the material will be dry enough to burn. That way he'll have enough time to make the inspection and if changes are needed, the landowner will have time to make

them," Green said. "We encourage everyone to abide by this new law. We're not here to make it hard for people to get their work done. But we do want to prevent as many forest fires as possible and keep the air from getting so filled with smoke that people have a hard time seeing and breathing," continued Green. The new law does have some teeth in it. Anyone doing burning in violation of the law - without a permit or when permits have been cancelled, for example - can be required by the county ranger to extinguish their fire. If they don't the N. C. Forest Service is empowered to enter the land where the burning is being

done, extinguish the fire and, according to the new law "the person responsible for setting the fire shall reimburse the department (i.e. the Forest Service) for the expenses incurred." This is in addition to any civil or criminal penalties imposed by a court. Violation of the new law is a misdemeanor, punishable by a \$50.00 fine, 30 days imprisonment, or both. "It is going to take everyone's help to make this law work. If all the people doing land clearing and burning cooperate, we should have little or no trouble with smoke. But just one person violating this new law and setting a windrow on fire at the wrong time or without a permit can literally smoke up the whole countryside," Spivey concluded.

Experts Advise Caution In Gift Selection

RALEIGH — This Christmas think twice before you buy darts, arrows or guns with small pellets warns the North Carolina Society of Ophthalmology. That game that looks like an adventure in the box can jeopardize a child's eyesight. The society, a group of some 250 medical doctors who specialize in total eye care, agree that one of the biggest problems is the age of the youngster who receives a given toy. "This holds true, even for spring mechanism toys, the jack-in-the-box concept," said Dr. Marshal S. Redding, of Elizabeth City, president of the group. "A young child may bend over the toy and let it go whack at the eye while a 10-year-old will instinctively know better. "Not all eye injuries caused by toys result in permanent damage," Dr. Redding said, "but even a seemingly harmless toy can cause a scratch on the cornea that is extremely painful." A blow to the eye can cause injury to the retina,

provoking a hemorrhage, swelling or even detachment. In most cases the injury is minor and temporary, but it can be serious, said the Elizabeth City ophthalmologist. Anyone struck in the eye who complains of blurring or spots before the eye should get immediate medical attention. Cuts around the eyelids fall in the same category, added Dr. Redding. If you're playing Santa to a teen or adult, the Society suggests that you consider safety eye guards or goggles as a stocking stuffer. Priced at under \$6 at most sporting goods stores, they can be an eyesaver for individuals who play handball, racquet ball or paddleball. The hunters in your family should also appreciate industrial strength glasses as they protect eyes from limbs and underbrush as well as stray and ricochet bullets, recommended one ophthalmologist. Another said, "I'd wrap up an extra

pair of safety goggles for friends who are receiving power tools under the tree." "No one wants to have a holiday spoiled by injury," concluded Dr. Redding.

"and if you think 'safety' as you purchase gifts for family and friends, you'll go a long way toward making this an accident-free, memorable Christmas."



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By Lee Wallio
 Field Representative
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People who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments can be penalized if they fail to report an event which could affect the amount of their payment. Any penalty imposed is in addition to repayment of an overpayment resulting from failure to properly report an event. The first violation results in a \$25 penalty; the second in a \$50 penalty; and additional violations result in \$100 penalties. Overpayments most often result when a person fails to report receiving additional income, earnings, additions to bank accounts, receipt of money or other gifts, acquiring property, or changes in living arrangements. A penalty can be imposed when:

- The person fails to make a timely report of an event.
- The unreported event could cause a reduction in payment, suspension or termination of payments.
- Payment was received and accepted for the period of time involved.
- There is no good cause for relief from the penalty.

A booklet, *What You Have To Know About SSI*, contains detailed information about what events should be reported. Every person receiving SSI payments should have a copy. Those who do not, can obtain a copy from the Elizabeth City Social Security office. SSI is a federal program which provides a basic cash income to needy people who are 65 or older or disabled or blind. Although SSI is administered by Social Security, funds to make payments come from the U. S. Government Treasury general funds, not from Social Security taxes.

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