



## MICHIGAN'S CONFUSING BURN POLICY

**THE POLICY:** Originally, the State legislators passed a law so that as of April 1, 2011, citizens would no longer be allowed open burning of *household* trash in their yards. The new ban would have applied to the entire state and would have superseded any local burning policies regarding household trash. The new law would not have applied to recreational or campfires, and would not have included the burning of leaves, brush or lawn clippings. HOWEVER, on 3/21/11, the DEQ suspended this proposed rule package pending further review. This means that the proposed changes *did not take effect* April 1, 2011 after all.

**WHY THE PROPOSED CHANGE?** Studies have proven the burning of household trash releases toxic pollutants such as hydrogen cyanide, benzene, lead, mercury and carbon dioxide into the air. The smoke is a nuisance to neighbors of the trash burning citizens and the particulate material released in the smoke is harmful to those with respiratory issues, such as asthma. Also, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), 30% of all wildfires are initiated by careless burning of debris, and results in hundreds of thousands of dollars of property damage.

**WHAT IS CLASSIFIED AS "OPEN BURNING"?** According to the State of Michigan, "open burning" is the burning of unwanted combustible materials such as paper, trees, brush, leaves, grass and other debris (examples are trash, broken furniture or food by-products) where smoke and other emissions are released directly into the air without passing through a chimney or stack. The definition of "open burning" also includes incineration devices that do not control the combustion of air to maintain an adequate temperature and do not provide sufficient residence time for complete combustion.

**PERMITS STILL NEEDED** Currently, to obtain a burning permit for either household or non-household trash, check the computer link <http://www.dnr.state.mi.us/burnpermits/> after 10 AM on any day for a map of conditions favorable to burning in Benzie County, and then to Crystal Lake Township. Procuring a permit does not relieve the responsible person(s) of liability for all damages resulting from the escape of the fire. Citizens are responsible for [understanding Michigan's Open Burning Laws and Rules](#).

### **Alternatives to Burning**

The DNRE and CLT suggests instead of burning trash, people consider some of these other alternatives, including: • Yard Waste Composting • Home Composting of food by-products or waste • Recycling • Locate and use local landfills for solid waste items that can't be recycled and composted, and investigate trash removal options • Proper scrap tire disposal • Learn about household hazardous waste disposal • Investigate to reduce construction and demolition waste To learn more, visit: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) Or for questions about the new regulation, contact the DNR or DEQ and contact Jim Ostrowski at 517-241-8057 or Brenda Blemaster at 517-335-6984. Locally, Benzie County's Recycling Coordinator is Marlene Woods-Zylstra at # 882-0554 or (cell) #651-1090.