



Changes to City Ordinance, Section 38 - Open Burning

The City of Tecumseh recently adopted changes to its Open Burning Ordinance that will take effect on November 30, 2012. The reason for these changes was to ensure that our ordinance is in compliance with the State of Michigan Public Act 451 of 1994, providing adequate safety measures and is also sensitive to the public health of our residents.

The ordinance prohibits the burning of trees, logs, brush, stumps, leaves, trash, refuse or grass clippings anywhere within the city limits. There are no exceptions to this and there are stiff penalties for violation of the ordinance.

Leaves, branches and grass clippings should be disposed of by utilizing the City's yard waste pickup services or by establishing your own composting program. Leaves must be set out during your trash pickup days in a biodegradable yard waste bag or a maximum 30 gallon can, clearly marked as yard waste. Branches, less than 4" in diameter, can be cut into 4' lengths, bundled with string or rope to a maximum of a 1 foot diameter bundle. These items are picked up by the City's trash contractor at no cost to you. Note: It is also a violation of a City ordinance to rake leaves into the street. The City's street sweeper is not capable of picking up large piles of leaves. In addition, leaves swept into the street collect in the sewers and can cause street flooding, not to mention the negative impact they have on our waterways.

Large items such as trees, logs and stumps can be disposed of by contacting one of the companies that may recycle the material for wood chips or by having them transported to a licensed landfill. If you hire a contractor to cut down or trim one of your trees, please make sure that removal is part of their services. You may also decide to cut the wood up for future use as firewood. Seasoned wood, which typically takes one year to dry out, smokes less and creates less of a nuisance.

The City's ordinance does not place special restrictions on items like gas or charcoal barbeques or grills. However, our Fire Chief does suggest that you take safety precautions by making sure that the equipment is safe and that there are no gas leaks. Secondly, avoid placing these units too close to your home or other combustible structures. It is a good idea to have a fire extinguisher ready in case of an emergency.

Patio wood burning units have become popular in recent years. Because they can create significant amounts of smoke, which may be offensive to your neighbor, the City requires that they be placed no closer than 35 feet from the nearest structure on an adjoining neighborhood lot. Only seasoned and clean wood can be burned in these units.

Some residents still enjoy the feeling of having a campfire in their backyard. While they can be a nice feature to enjoy, they also can create a safety hazard as well as a health nuisance to others. The City ordinance requires that a campfire can only be in your backyard and must be no larger than 3 feet in diameter and 3 foot high. They must be located no closer than 25 feet from other combustible material, and no closer than 35 feet from a neighbor's structure. This is to reduce the amount of smoke that may create a nuisance. Lastly, only seasoned and clean wood can be burned in a campfire.

As always, we encourage you to be sensitive to your neighbors when considering any type of burning. You can always call the Fire Chief for advice and guidance when making these decisions. The City's ordinance does however give the Fire Chief some flexibility to suspend the rights of this ordinance, if in his opinion, there is a significant safety hazard or unusual threat to public health. Lastly, while we like to avoid issuing citations, violation of the City's burn ordinance can be very costly. Fines can range from \$75 to as much as \$500.

For further questions you may call the Tecumseh Fire Department at 517.423.4545.