



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Linn County, Iowa

Air Quality Permitting for Prairie Management/Controlled Burns

Controlled burning is utilized to control vegetation and to properly manage prairie and forest ecosystems. In Linn County if other options for organics management have been explored and deemed ineffective/impractical, controlled burning is usually permitted with the use of a ¼ mile signature form/notification form to notify all those living/working in the affected area. This is done for public health reasons. Open burning of organic materials is a legal management tool but can also have adverse health effects on humans and our environment. Individuals with sensitive respiratory systems or respiratory ailments can suffer ill health effects if exposed to the particulate matter released into the atmosphere when burning organic material such as prairie grasses/plants. Linn County Public Health administers the permitting process for open burning.

Excerpt from Linn County Code of Ordinance 10.10 Open Burning:

Section 10.10.A.1(i) Other Burning:

Other open burning such as, but not limited to, native prairie management may be allowed on a **case by case basis**, through the issuing of an open burning permit, provided the Air Pollution Control Officer has determined that the burning **will not adversely effect the air quality or will not violate any sections of this Ordinance and is reasonable and practical as compared to other alternatives available.**

Section 10.10.A.2.

Open Burning Permits shall be issued by the Linn County Air Pollution Control Officer and the Fire Chief of the fire district having jurisdiction at the place of burning. Fees for Open Burning Permits shall be recommended by the Air Pollution Control Officer and be established by resolution of the Linn County Board of Supervisors, except federal, state, or local government agencies or public districts are not required to pay such fee. Open Burning Permits are valid provided the following conditions are met and maintained:

- a. The permit fee has been paid. Fees not paid in person shall be deemed paid on the date of mailing;
- b. Open burning permits must be signed by the Air Pollution Control Officer;
- c. Burning is conducted during the dates stated on the permit which shall be for periods no less than thirty (30) days and no greater than one (1) year.

- d. Unless otherwise approved by the Fire Chief having jurisdiction, burning shall be conducted during the hours of one half hour after sunrise until one half hour before sunset. The Linn County Sheriff's Department shall be notified upon such approval by the permit applicant.
- e. Burning is conducted in a safe and reasonable manner so as not to endanger life or property;
- f. Fires must be attended by the permit applicant or his/her agent at all times, this person shall have the burning permit in their possession at the time of burning:
- g. The Air Pollution Control Officer shall have the authority to deny issuance of an Open Burning Permit to any person who has failed to pay the fee for a previously issued Open Burning Permit; who has been previously cited for any violation of this Ordinance and has failed to pay in full all fines, court costs and restitution entered as a judgement against them or who is not current with any Court ordered payment plan for such fines, court costs and restitution. This provision does not limit the Air Pollution Control Officer's power to otherwise collect unpaid fees, fines, court costs and restitution.

Section 10.10.B. Unavailability of Exemptions in Certain Areas. Notwithstanding §10.10(A)(1)(e) and §10.10(A)(3)(c) of this ordinance, no person shall allow, cause or permit the open burning of residential waste, including landscape waste and leaves, within the city limits of Cedar Rapids, Hiawatha or Marion, Iowa.

- 1. Notwithstanding §10.10(A)(1)(f), and §10.10(A)(3)(c) of this ordinance, no person shall allow, cause or permit the open burning of residential waste and leaves, within one half mile of Cedar Rapids, Hiawatha, or Marion, Iowa which is classified as Urban Service Residential (USR) district in accordance with the Unified Development Code or otherwise incorporated. The effective date for this rule is January 1st, 2009.

Section 10.10.C. Any fire in violation of this Ordinance may be ordered extinguished by any agency designated by the Air Pollution Control Officer. This provision shall not limit the Air Pollution Control Officer from seeking penalties provided for in this Ordinance.

Permitting Process:

1. Receipt of burn permit application for controlled burning of weeds/prairie. Application can be made by phone, in person, or through www.linncleanair.org.
2. Linn County Air Quality personnel will contact you with ¼ mile signature form and list of all properties located within ¼ mile from proposed burn site. Please expect questions pertaining to the two items below.
3. Does the facility/homeowner/group have a management plan for prairie ecosystem?
 - a. If yes, great, is it being followed?
 - b. If no, discuss management options and goals of prairie ecosystem and develop a 3-5 year plan for how prairie is to be managed
4. Is the plot to be burned actually prairie or controlled burning of invasive weed species in woodlands or agricultural property?
 - a. If prairie and following overall management plan/goals burn ok with notification to all within ¼ mile.
 - b. If invasive species control what is the species to be controlled and what other methods have been tried to control? Burn usually ok with ¼ mile notification and sound rationale for burn.

NOTE: Usually not possible to allow controlled burns within incorporated towns/cities due to dense population and the potential health consequences involved.