

NEWS RELEASE

The Wichita County Commissioners met on Monday, September 26, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. in a regular session to discuss consider and/or take action to enact a Burn Ban. The order will take effect on **Saturday, October 1 at 12:01 a.m.** and will remain in force for ninety (90) days unless extended by the Commissioners Court.

The burn ban order prohibits all outdoor burning and is in effect within the unincorporated areas of the county.

This burn ban does not prohibit outdoor burning activities:

A. Related to public health and safety that are authorized by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for:

(1) firefighter training; (2) public utility, natural gas pipeline or mining operations; (3) planting or harvesting of agricultural crops; or, (4) burns that are conducted by a prescribed burn manager certified under Section 153.048, Natural Resources Code, and meet the standards of Section 153.047, Natural Resources Code.

B. Related to commercial or professional welding operations that are authorized by the *Burning Guidelines During Emergency* attached to the court's order as follows:

1. The use of combustible materials in an outdoor environment by any person is prohibited.

2. Combustible materials include, but are not limited to, discarded cigarettes or other flammable materials used in activities such as welding and any other activity that could result in a wildfire.

3. Welding is allowed by commercial/professional welders under the following guidelines ONLY:

a. A spotter is required for each welder, each cutter, each grinder, and for any activity that causes or may cause a spark.

b. A diameter around the welding area shall be a minimum of 25 feet and clear of vegetation, if possible, and kept wet. The welding perimeter must be three times the height of the actual welding. Example: if the welding is occurring ten feet off the ground, a perimeter of thirty (30) feet must be protected.

c. A minimum of 10 gallons of water must be available on site.

d. A minimum of one (1) water pressure fire extinguisher per spotter is required and one spare. Each extinguisher should be at least 2½ gallons.

e. Each welding rig must have a Class B Chemical Fire Extinguisher, minimum 10lbs.

f. If the work area cannot be cleared of vegetation, proper precautionary measures must be taken. (Example: protecting brush, etc., by utilizing fire resistant tarps).

g. Welding in an enclosed area is acceptable.

h. No welding is permitted if winds are 20 mph or greater.

i. Prior to ANY welding activity a phone call shall be placed by the welder or company conducting welding operations to the Wichita County Sheriff's Department (940-766-8170) relaying the location of the project, cell phone number for contact person, name of responsible party and name of welder.

A violation of this order is a class C misdemeanor, which carries a fine not to exceed \$500.00.

GRILLING SAFETY TIPS

There's nothing like outdoor grilling. It's one of the most popular ways to cook food. But, a grill placed too close to anything that can burn is a fire hazard. They can be very hot, causing burn injuries. Follow these simple tips and you will be on the way to safe grilling.

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under the eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.

FOR CHARCOAL GRILLS

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

FOR PROPANE GRILLS

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year.
- If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or soapy bubble test, turn off gas tank and grill.
- If the leak doesn't stop, call the fire department.
- If the flame goes out, turn the grill off and wait at least 15 minutes before relighting it.

Questions on the burn ban may be directed to the Wichita County Emergency Management Office.

Point of Contact: Mr. Lee Bourgojn, Emergency Management Coordinator, 940-763-0820