



Park County DES

Office of Emergency Management

Open Burning and the New Burn Permit System in Park County

Open burning is an important tool for improving the land and reducing our risks from wildfire. The Native Americans have been using fire this way long before Europeans settled in Montana. Today we must manage open burning to ensure public health and safety. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality limits what can be burned and when to ensure adequate air quality. Park County uses a burn permit system to differentiate controlled burns from wildfire, to promote safety and to restrict burning during extreme conditions.

Park County has implemented a new electronic burn permit system replacing the old pen and paper system managed by our 911 Dispatchers. This change creates efficiencies saving time and money, improves information capabilities, and reduces unnecessary phone calls and complexity in our 911/Dispatch Center.

The new burn permit system was cooperatively developed and is supported by a public - private alliance between Park County, the Montana Department of Administration's State Information Technology Services Division, and Montana Interactive, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of eGovernment provider NIC (Nasdaq:EGOV). Montana Interactive now manages the automated system for Park County.

Anyone can purchase a burn permit online anytime at www.BurnPermits.mt.gov. Permits are also available in person at Park County Rural Fire District #1, 304 E. Park St. Livingston from 8am-1pm Monday – Friday or from the Park County DES, Accounting and Clerk & Recorder's offices at the City – County Complex 414 E. Callender St. Livingston. Permits are available by mail using applications found at fire departments and other locations around the county.

Park County burn permits cost \$7.00 for unlimited use through the calendar year. This is not a new expense. The cost of managing the old system through the 911/Dispatch Center was paid for using everyone's taxes. Moving to a fee for permit model simply changes how we pay for the burn permit system. The new system is now completely funded by those use it. System costs are minimized as expenses are shared among the 15 participating counties.

Benefits of electronic information are utility and accessibility. Your information is entered once and can be used for years of open burning. Your personal information is secure but readily available to emergency responders when needed. Information about burns in progress and finished is available to everyone. An online map will quickly show whether a suspicious smoke is a controlled burn or possibly a wildfire that should be reported. Checking the online map before calling 911 will create significant resource savings for 911/Dispatch, Fire Departments and the Sheriff's Office.

The old burn permit system served Park County well for many years. Change was necessary because Park County is changing. The cell phone, internet and emerging technologies have transformed how we report and respond to emergencies. First responders and public safety officers are being asked to do more than ever before. Park County is committed to engaging technology to provide the highest level of service and safety. Your participation in the new electronic burn permit system will help us accomplish these goals. If you have any questions, please contact the Fire Warden's office for assistance: (406) 222-4188.