



NOVEMBER: WINTER BURNING

Remember those piles you covered in the past months with tarps or cardboard to keep the slash and debris nice and dry? As the ground freezes and the snow begins to fall, this month may be the perfect time to light the match and take advantage of the low fire risk.

The key to burning this time of year is creating a clean, hot burn to maximize consumption of the materials and minimize smoke production. Keep piles free of dirt and aerate to encourage effective burning. Excessive smoldering can severely impact your neighborhood with smoke and result in a request to close down your burning operation. Make sure there are no trees or structures in the burn area that could get showered with sparks. It's a good idea to call in your burn to the local dispatch center, even if you aren't required to do so, to save your local fire department some time checking on a report of a fire.

The final consideration is to make sure the pile is out – really out. Don't assume that Old Man Winter will put it out for you. A large

burn pile can stay hot for months and may continue to burn in the duff, peat, and roots in the ground. You may need to use lots of water or mix in snow as you turn your piles over and over for extinguishment. If need be, consider using machinery to turn the piles. Many landowners have been surprised in the spring when a long-dormant burn pile sparks a wildland fire. As the snow goes out, make sure there is a clearing around the pile down to mineral soil, as a smoldering fire can creep through vegetation in the ground and ignite surrounding fuels. Using the back of your hand to feel for heat is one way to determine that you've done the job right, but be careful not to step into a deep-burning ash pit. Use a stick to probe into the ash before stepping in.

Firewise team members to visit your home and offer advice. For more information on ways you can be FireWise, go to www.firewisekp.com contact FireWise Kenai Peninsula 260-4262 or sharon.roesch@alaska.gov.