

SOME FACTS ABOUT A COUNTY OUTDOOR BURN BAN

Generally the Commissions Court of a County adopts a burn ban when drought conditions have caused severe conditions with the possibility of increased wildfire occurrences. The Texas Forest Service, through the use of the Keetch-Byram Drought Index, or other similar index, usually defines the drought within your county or region.

Other factors also combine to assist the Commissioner's Court in adopting an outdoor burn ban, such as, citizen input, VFD concerns, or law enforcement requests to name some. Once the need for a burn ban is determined by a Commissioner or the County Judge, that request is placed on the Commissioner's Court agenda for adoption. The Court at its regular or special meeting considers the agenda item, and either adopts a burn ban or tables it for future consideration.

When the burn ban is adopted, it can remain in place as long as 90 days before the Court must reconsider it, or remove it. Under the Llano County Commissioners Court rules a burn ban can only be put in place by a vote of the Court, however, the County Judge may remove the outdoor burn ban if conditions change. The Court would then ratify the removal at the next scheduled Commissioners Court hearing.

An outdoor burn ban adopted by the commissioners Court is for the unincorporated areas of the County. A City may have ordinances that deal with outdoor burning also. Generally cities within the County closely follow the Counties outdoor burning guidelines as established by the order adopted.

There are some exceptions to the outdoor burning order that are allowed under the Texas Local Government Code, Chpt 352.081. The main one that is seen in Llano County is the agricultural crop exception, or a prescribed burn manager under Section 153.048, Natural Resources Code.

In Llano County another common exception is the burning of prickly pear by ranchers in order to supplement their feeding of livestock. In drought conditions the supply of natural grasses, hay, and other types of food supplements are also diminished. Many ranchers turn to "pear burning" for feed.

However, there are rules to follow when there is a need to pear burn. In general, the rules are these:

- a) A call to the Sheriff's dispatcher (325/247-5767) is required to identify the time and Place of a burn.
- b) Wind speed predicted for the day of the burning must be 15 mph or less.
- c) Precautions need to be taken to have a water supply or other fire fighting equipment available.
- d) It is recommended that a cell phone, or land line be readily available, and
- e) Generally burning should be done during the day light hours.

And, finally what other outdoor burning can occur during an outdoor burn ban adopted by Commissioner's Court. Llano Counties' local rules allow bar be cuing if contained in a pit area; and household trash that is burned in a barrel or container that is covered by mesh or screen material. No other outdoor burning is allowed.

Generally, a person commits an offense if the person knowingly or intentionally violates a prohibition or restriction established by an order adopted. An offense under this subsection LGC 352.081 is a Class C misdemeanor.