



South Dakota Wildland Fire Division Burning Permit

Burning Permits FAQ's "Frequently Asked Questions"

1. **What is the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District?** The Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District (BHFFPD) was formed by state law in 1941. It was created in part 'to protect the timber on areas subject to unusual fire dangers'. Early in recorded Black Hills history, the first foresters and firefighters came to realize that the Ponderosa Pine/grassland ecosystem of the Black Hills could burn any time of the year when no significant snow cover was present. And unlike higher elevation forests in the Rocky Mountain West, which hold continuous snow cover in the winter, an open burning season in the lower elevation Black Hills would result in many escaped fires on a yearly basis.
2. **What area of South Dakota does the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District cover?** The area covered is identified in South Dakota Codified Law SDCL 34-35-15. Incorporated towns and municipalities within this area are not part of the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District. If you want to conduct open burning in those towns or cities, you would need to contact the local city officials. A map showing the Black Hills Fire Protection District can be found at <http://wildlandfire.sd.gov/burnpermits/burnpermits.aspx>.
3. **What is the difference between a small slash pile and a large slash pile?** When applying for a permit on-line, you will be given the choice of a small or large slash pile on the permit menu.
 - A **small slash pile** is a brush pile constructed by hand, usually no larger than 5 feet in height, and 6 feet in diameter. These handpiles are very common sight to see in the Black Hills and comprise 95% of the temporary burning permits issued.
 - A **large slash pile** is a mechanically constructed pile that is associated with a commercial logging sale or land development activity. These piles can only be lit under certain conditions, given that these piles can loft hot fire brands for a half-mile or more and smolder for weeks after lit. It is important for fire prevention purposes that a piece of heavy machinery, such as bulldozer, skid-steer loader or tractor is available to work these large piles as they burn down.
4. **How do I get a burn permit?** Go to <https://apps.sd.gov/ag73burnpermit/> and you can get a permit anytime during the burn season, even during holidays, weekends, and after hours. If you need assistance you may call 1-800-275-4955 (Great Plains Dispatch Center) during office hours (M-F 8am-4:30pm).
5. **When I issue myself a permit on-line, do I need to contact the local dispatch center?** YES! Call your local dispatch center on the day of ignition to notify them. The local center dispatchers will be able to view your permit details once you issue yourself a permit. Your local dispatch center phone number will print on your permit as a courtesy, based on which VFD and county you indicate on the application.
6. **Who can view the information that I'm providing on-line when I get a permit?** Local dispatchers, law enforcement and fire officials will be able to view relevant information (first/ last name, date of permit, type of

permit, physical location of permitted burn and username). Personal information such as phone number, mailing address and e-mail address can only be viewed by the system administrator.

7. **Can I go on-line to get a permit for a broadcast burn?** No. A broadcast burn is defined as fire that is allowed to burn freely through the grass, underbrush, and timber; this is generally known as a “prescribed burn”. Broadcast burns require a written burn plan that goes through a lengthy review and approval process before conducting such burns on private land in the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District.
 8. **What conditions are the safest to burn in?** Look for days that will see a continuous snow cover and cold temperatures that will hold the snow cover for several days.
 9. **Do I need to get more than one permit per burning season?** Potentially. If the burn location or season changes, then you need a new permit. If you are burning in the same location within the same burn season, then one permit will be sufficient for the entire burn season. All permits expire on March 31.
 10. **Who decides when Burn Permits are available and burning is allowed?** South Dakota Wildland Fire Division will determine when safe burn conditions exist. This information is on the burn permit website home page.
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