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For Immediate Release

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Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Open Burning Ban Begins May 1, 2010 for 54 Georgia Counties

Beginning May 1st and ending September 30th, EPD's Open Burning Ban will be enforced in 54 Georgia counties. The Open Burning Ban prohibits citizens and businesses from burning yard and land-clearing debris. This rule is in addition to the year-round state ban on the burning of household garbage.

EPD is reminding citizens that both these rules are in place for a reason – and the reason is health.

Besides the obvious effects of smoke on the human body such as watery eyes, smoke from fires contains chemicals and pollutants that negatively impact a person's health.

Burning yard waste releases nitrogen oxides and particle pollution into the air. Both pollutants contribute to lung and heart disease. Particle pollution is made up of extremely small particles that can increase the risk of a heart attack. In the heat of summer, nitrogen oxides combine with fumes from fuels, paints and vegetation to form ground-level ozone. Ground-level ozone can cause inflammation to the lungs.

Jim Kelly, Manager of the Air Protection Branch's Planning and Regulatory Development Unit explains: "The burn ban applies to the burning of vegetative debris on an individual's property, and in some counties, burning for land clearing or forest management. It is enforced during smog season when levels of particle pollution and ozone are highest."

Burning household garbage, which is banned year-round in Georgia, releases even more dangerous pollution. Toxic chemicals, including dioxin, are released into the air. Dioxins are cancer - causing chemicals formed when materials commonly found in household garbage are burned. Dioxins can accumulate in the food chain - passing from the air into feed crops, then eaten by domestic meat and dairy animals and then eaten by humans. Dioxins can also settle on the water and enter waterways by soil erosion. Other dangerous pollutants released are particle pollution, sulfur dioxide, lead, mercury and hexachlorobenzene.

The Open Burning Ban that begins May 1st is not new. Beginning in 1996 with the 13-county metro Atlanta area, it has gradually come to include 54 counties. With Georgia's growth and development comes more traffic, more industry, more land clearing and more building -- all contribute to air pollution. Georgia currently has 27 counties in "nonattainment" for ozone and/or particle pollution. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines areas where air quality does not meet federal air quality health standards as in "non-attainment."

EPD is charged by EPA to improve the air quality in Georgia. The Open Burning Ban and the year - round garbage ban are part of the strategy to improve the quality of Georgia's air - making it healthier to breathe.

Jac Capp, Georgia EPD Air Branch Chief, states that: "We are working hard to improve the quality of air that Georgians breathe. We adopt rules, issue permits and encourage voluntary measures that will have a positive impact on air quality. The citizens of Georgia are key partners as we pursue our environmental goals. Composting or other alternatives to burning are steps in the right direction - we're all in this together."

Citizens can access more information on the Open Burning Ban by calling the EPD District Office in their area (phone numbers listed below.) Small businesses can obtain help and information by calling EPD's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program toll-free at 877-427-6255.

Counties included in the ban and the appropriate EPD District Office phone numbers follow:

- **Metro Atlanta District Office: 404-362-2671** Clayton, Coweta, DeKalb, Fayette, Gwinnett, Heard, Henry, Rockdale, Spalding counties
- **Northeast District Office (Athens): 706-369-6376** Banks, Barrow, Butts, Clarke, Hall, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Putnam, Walton counties
- **Northeast District Office (Augusta): 706-792-7744** Columbia, Richmond counties
- **West Central District Office: 478-751-6612** Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Lamar, Monroe, Peach, Pike, Twiggs, Upson, Meriwether, Troup counties
- **Mountain District Office: 770-387-4900** Bartow, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Dawson, Douglas, Floyd, Fulton, Forsyth, Gordon, Haralson, Lumpkin, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker counties

For more information about alternatives to burning such as composting and chipping, please call Joe Dunlop at the Department of Community Affairs at 404-679-1598 or email him at joe.dunlop@dca.ga.gov , or call Roy Edwards at Georgia's Department of Natural Resource's Sustainability Division at 404-657-7449 or email him at roy.edwards@gadnr.org .

Debris can also be hauled to a commercial processing/grinding/composting operation or to an inert or construction and demolition landfill. For a list of landfills in your area, please call EPD's Solid Waste Management Program at 404-362-2692.

For more information on the open burning ban and exemptions to the rule, please go to www.georgiaair.org and click on "Hot Topics" to visit the [Open Burning Ban page](#). General information about air quality in Georgia can be found on the [Public Affairs and Outreach site](#).

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