

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**David Martin, *Cabinet Secretary*Butch Tongate, *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****March 13, 2012**

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**Environment Department Issues PSA and Reminder to Residents:
Open Burning of Most Household Waste is Illegal**

Santa Fe, NM – New Mexico Environment Department Secretary David Martin is reminding New Mexico residents that open burning of most types of household waste is prohibited by state regulation.

“Residents should be aware there are environmental dangers to most types of open burning,” says Martin. “There are also fire safety concerns, as demonstrated by an illegal open burn that led to a brush fire in Dona Ana County last month.”

Dona Ana County Fire and Emergency Services needed assistance from three nearby fire departments to contain a fire near Highway 478 and Joy Road. A county resident stepped away from an illegal open burn during windy conditions. When he returned, the flames had spread across a ditch and damaged some nearby railroad tracks. The resident was cited for three separate open burning violations.

In addition to the threat of igniting larger brush or wildfires, the Open Burning Regulation serves to protect residents from toxic chemicals. Since June 1, 2004, open burning of most types of household waste has been prohibited by state regulation. Scientific studies demonstrate that smoke from the burning of modern waste, such as plastic food packaging, contains many toxins. These toxic chemicals are particularly hazardous to children, the elderly, and persons with respiratory illnesses.

For those persons concerned about the cost of proper and legal household waste disposal by curbside pickup service or at a transfer station, here are some questions to consider:

- What are the potential healthcare costs of illness or disability caused by repeated exposure to harmful chemicals in smoke from trash burning?
- How much personal income is lost by persons who have respiratory illnesses or medical conditions worsened by smoke exposure?

- Can any price be placed on the loss of quality of life for persons with birth defects caused by toxins from waste burning smoke?

Please think about the risks involved in this practice and dispose of your household waste properly. For more information, residents are encouraged to call 1-800-224-7009 or your local Environment Department office and ask about the Open Burning Regulation.

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