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For Immediate Release

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## **Environment Department Reminds Residents of Outdoor Trash Burning Ban**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department’s Air Quality Bureau reminds citizens that the state's open burning regulation prohibits the burning of household waste.

Some residents are still burning trash outside although the regulation banning burning has been in effect since June 1, 2004. That regulation ([www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb)) applies statewide, except for tribal lands and in Bernalillo County.

“Backyard burning of trash is a major source of dioxins, benzene, metals and other highly toxic air pollutants,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “We want to make sure the burning stops so New Mexicans won’t have to breathe in those harmful, cancer causing toxins.”

Studies show that burn barrels are a bigger source of dioxins than all the major industrial sources in New Mexico combined. Dioxins and other toxins produced by burn barrels concentrate in the ash and persist in the environment for years. Those cancer causing toxins accumulate in the food chain and in the human body over a lifetime. Dioxins also interfere with fetal development and sex hormone function. Exceptions to the open burning regulation include recreational and ceremonial fires, fireplaces and wood stoves, non-commercial cooking of food, warming fires at construction sites, and flares at oil and gas facilities.

### **Vegetative material can be burned under the following conditions:**

- 1.** Vegetative material includes yard waste, weeds, slash, tree trimmings, crop stubble, rangeland and untreated wood or wood products.
- 2.** Small burns, less than 10 acres or 1,000 cubic feet of piled material per day. Larger burns are covered under the Smoke Management regulation (20.2.65 NMAC).
- 3.** Vegetation burning is prohibited within 300 feet of neighboring houses and businesses.
- 4.** Before burning vegetation, the burner must notify the local fire authority. The burner must comply with requirements of the Open Burning regulation as well as any requirement of the local fire authority, including any requirement to obtain a permit from them.
- 5.** Burning is limited to those hours between one hour after sunrise and one hour before sunset.
- 6.** If more than 1 acre or 100 cubic feet of material is burned, notification must be provided to all neighbors within one-fourth mile.

Under state law, violations of the Open Burning regulation are a petty misdemeanor. Also, the Department may assess civil penalties for violations, which are a minimum of \$1,000 per violation.

For more information contact Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475 or the Air Quality Bureau at (505) 827-1494.