



bulkley valley - lakes district  
airshed management society

# COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN *for* CLEAN AIR

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*A five-year strategy*

## 9



## BACKYARD BURNING

For full report, see [www.cleanairplan.ca](http://www.cleanairplan.ca)

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# Backyard Burning

## ***9.1 Background***

**B**ackyard burning was for many years an acceptable practice. The level of acceptance has diminished since the late 1960's, first with increased town populations and a higher likelihood of having to inhale the smoke, and more recently with the realization that the smoke is in fact a serious environmental and health concern.

## ***9.2 Significance of Source to Ambient Air Quality***

Backyard burning has an undetermined and variable influence to overall air quality in the BVL D. It is a problem during poor dispersion conditions at, or close to, ground level in populated areas - resulting in high concentrations of **fine particulates** in residential areas. It also is a problem when garbage and other non clean-wood products are burned.

In addition to the production of fine particulates, the burning of garbage or other materials such as demolition waste, painted wood, and manufactured wood products can produce significant amounts of **dioxins**. Potential health effects of dioxins include effects on reproduction and fetal development, **immune system** suppression, hormone system disruption, and cancer.

## ***9.3 Emission Reduction Efforts to Date***

### Smithers and Telkwa

- Town of Smithers Open Burning Bylaw No. 1155, 1996. This bylaw prohibits the "open burning of domestic waste materials, garden refuse, garbage or noxious material". The bylaw also prohibits the "open burning of land clearing waste" unless they hold a permit issued pursuant to Section 3 of the Bylaw.
- Town of Smithers grass clippings composting site at 2888 - 19th Avenue
- Smithers Recycling Centre at 2889 Tatlow Rd in Smithers for processing of paper products, cardboard, and number 2 plastics including milk jugs.
- The Smithers/Telkwa Transfer Station on Donaldson Road accepts much of the material that may be destined for the backyard burn barrel. Materials must be sorted into categories including wood, metal, appliances, tires, and mixed garbage for transfer to the landfill site.

### Houston

- District of Houston municipal composting site in the Industrial Site

### Burns Lake

- The Village of Burns Lake requires residents to have a burning permit for backyard burning between April 15th and October 15th. Bylaw 570, Permit for Burning, includes an extract from the Fire Code that states "The Fire Chief may have a special permit for open air burning of brush,

grass, weeds and other materials"... "No person to whom a special permit has been issued under Section 27 shall, on or in any fire burn any rubber tires, oil, tar, asphalt shingles, battery boxes, plastic materials, or any similar materials which may produce heavy black smoke".

- The Village of Burns Lake encourages residents to take grass clippings to the composting site at 5th and Carroll Street.

#### ***9.4 Relevant Regulations and Community Plans***

- Environmental Management Act prohibition against pollution
- The Environmental Management Act Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation
- The Forest and Range Practices Act of British Columbia
- The Town of Smithers Open Burning Bylaw No. 1155, 1996
- The Village of Burns Lake Bylaw 570 Permit for Burning

#### ***9.5 Community Consultation/Key Players***

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
- The District of Houston
- The Houston Fire Department, Chief Ken Thompson
- The Town of Smithers
- The Smithers Fire Department, Chief Les Schumacher
- The Village of Burns Lake
- The Burns Lake Fire Department, Chief Jim McBride
- The Village of Hazelton
- The Village of Hazelton Temporary Fire Chief, Nick Marshall
- The District of New Hazelton
- The District of New Hazelton Fire Chief, Clifford Coukell

#### ***9.6 Goals, Indicators and Strategies***

Table 9-1 summarizes our approach to reducing emissions from backyard burning. Education and regulation, as well as promotion and development of alternatives to burning such as recycling and composting will be the cornerstone of our success.

**Table 9-1 Goals, Indicators and Strategies**

Goals	Indicators	Strategies	Status
To reduce or eliminate air quality degradation attributable to backyard burning.	Public complaints	Implement a public communications/ education strategy to find alternatives.  Radio and newspaper public service announcements	In April 2006, AMS developed a brochure for the District of Hazelton on backyard burning. This was mailed out to each household with utility bills. The brochure was reviewed by the Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Environment.  This brochure can easily be adapted for other communities.
		Implement back yard burning bylaws. Needs review to determine appropriateness for each community including rural properties	District of Houston has a draft bylaw to address both backyard burning and wood burning appliances (May 2006).

**9.7 Additional Working Group recommendations**

- Meet with Municipal Council and Fire Department representatives to discuss alternatives and rationale (Morice CWG)

**9.8 Tools and Resources**

- Model Municipal Bylaw for Regulating Residential Backyard Burning  
<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/air/particulates/pdfs/bylaw.pdf>
- Recycling Council of BC: [www.rcbc.bc.ca](http://www.rcbc.bc.ca)
- Composting Council of Canada: [www.compost.org](http://www.compost.org)
- Zero Waste North - Find out where to recycle, repair and reuse goods in the BVL D area: [www.footprintbc.com/zerowastenorth/](http://www.footprintbc.com/zerowastenorth/)