



Imperial County

Agricultural Burning Fact Sheet

Are you thinking about burning a field?

Because burning creates harmful smoke, consider other ways to clear your field. If you do plan to burn, read the *Agricultural Burning: Self Instruction Handbook* by the California Air Resources Board. This handbook gives useful information about the rules for agricultural burning, and tells how to make less smoke when you do burn fields. You can get this handbook for free by calling the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) at (760) 482-4606, or at www.arb.ca.gov/cap/handbooks/handbooks.htm.

This fact sheet gives information about how smoke from agricultural burning can affect health and suggests actions you can take to protect the health of your neighbors and your workers.

How can I protect my neighbors' health?

If your neighbors live close enough to your field to smell smoke, or live within a mile and a half of smoke from your field, use a good-neighbor policy and let your neighbors know that you will be burning a field close to them. You can:



- Alert your neighbors by going door-to-door. Pass out the fact sheet, *Protect Yourself from Smoke during Agricultural Burning*, available at www.ehib.org/papers/AgBurning_09_22GenPub.pdf.
- Make and use a phone list of your neighbors. Let them know about the burn before it happens.
- Find out about their concerns and consider if there is anything more you can do.

How can I protect the health of my workers?

When you burn, keep workers away from the field.

For workers who must be within 300 feet of the field — the distance of a football or soccer field:

- Go inside if possible. Close doors and windows. Run the air conditioning or ventilation system. If possible, set the system on "recirculate." Do not use swamp coolers or whole house/building fans.
- Workers who must be near the field should wear face masks that seal tightly to the face and filter out smoke particles (see next page).

If anyone that has been in or near the smoke has a hard time breathing, very bad coughing, chest pain, or feels very uncomfortable, call 911.

Which face masks will protect the health of my workers?



Straps on N95, N100, and P100 respirators must go above and below the ears.

Filtering face piece respirators labeled “**NIOSH**” and “**N95**,” “**N100**,” or “**P100**,” can help protect workers from particles in smoke. To protect workers against both particles and vapors in smoke, use half-face rubber (elastomeric) respirators, which have both N95, N100, or P100 filters and “organic vapor” cartridges. Your safety equipment supplier can help you choose the right equipment.

Those who must be in close to the burn, including those lighting the field, should be in a full respiratory protection program. Employers must provide medical evaluations for respirator use, fit-testing and training on respirator use. For more information, please read *Respiratory Protection in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for*

Small-business Employers, available from Cal/OSHA at www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/respiratory.pdf.

What else can I do?

Talk to fellow farmers who don’t burn. Ask why they don’t burn and about other ways to clear your field.

How does burning affect the air?

When fields are burned, particles and harmful chemicals get into the air. Most particles in smoke from burning fields are very tiny.

How can smoke harm health?

Particles and chemicals in the smoke can get into your throat and lungs and may cause breathing problems, including asthma attacks. Smoke can irritate the eyes and airways, and may cause coughing, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, headaches, stinging eyes, or a runny nose. Some particles can also pass from the lungs to other parts of your body and may cause other health problems.

For people who have heart or lung disease, smoke may make their symptoms worse. People with heart disease could have chest pain, shortness of breath, or fatigue. People with lung disease may not be able to breathe as deeply as usual, and they may have coughing, chest discomfort, wheezing, or shortness of breath.

Children, older people, and people who breathe smoke often are more likely to have health problems.

The Agricultural Burning Emission Reduction Credit (ERC) Certificate Program

You can get a certificate, which may be sold, for not burning your fields. Call the Imperial County APCD at (760) 482-4606 for information about the Agricultural Burning Emission Reduction Credit (ERC) Certificate Program.