SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN AQMD  RULES AND REGULATIONS

RULE 501 AGRICULTURAL BURNING
Adopted 9-13-71
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100 GENERAL

101 PURPOSE: To reduce air pollution through the regulation of agricultural burning.

110 SEVERABILITY: If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this rule is, for any reason, held invalid, unconstitutional, or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed as a separate, distinct, and independent provision, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof.

200 DEFINITIONS

201 AGRIBUSINESS: The growing of crops or the raising of fowl or animals for the primary purpose of:
201.1 Making a profit,
201.2 Providing a livelihood, or
201.3 Conducting agricultural research or instruction by an educational institution.

202 AGRIBUSINESS WASTE:
202.1 Unwanted materials produced wholly from agribusiness, or
202.2 Grass and weeds in or adjacent to fields in cultivation or being prepared for cultivation.

203 AGRIBUSINESS-RELATED WASTE:
203.1 Materials not produced wholly from agribusiness, but which are intimately related to the growing or harvesting of crops and which are used in the field. Examples of agribusiness-related waste include, but are not limited to: raisin drying trays, paper hot caps, and untreated grape stakes.
203.2 Agribusiness-related waste does not include:
   a. Plastic; rubber; synthetic rubber; ornamental or landscape vegetation; shop wastes; construction material; demolition debris; garbage; rubbish; oil filters; tires; tar, tar paper, or other tar-containing materials; petroleum waste; flammable liquid waste; livestock bedding; metal; or motor vehicles.
   b. Any material used for packing or processing agricultural products including, but not limited to, broken boxes, pallets, packaging material, or packing boxes.
   c. Containers of agricultural chemicals, except for empty paper containers of agricultural chemicals (see Sections 204.9, 216, and 312).

204 AGRICULTURAL BURNING: Open outdoor fires:
204.1 To dispose of agribusiness waste, or
204.2 To dispose of agribusiness-related waste, or
204.3 For forest management, or
204.4 For range improvement, or
204.5 For the improvement of land for wildlife and game habitat, or
204.6 To prevent disease or pests (e.g., the burning of diseased crops or disease-contaminated bee boxes), or
204.7 For irrigation system management, or
204.8 For wild land vegetation management, or
204.9 To dispose of empty paper containers of agricultural chemicals.

205 AGRICULTURAL BURNING PERMIT: A permit issued pursuant to Section 402 that authorizes a permit holder to conduct agricultural burning.
206 **AGRICULTURAL BURNING PLAN:** A document that:

206.1 Is required by the *Agricultural Burning Guidelines* in Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, and

206.2 Has been prepared by the Sacramento Valley Basinwide Air Pollution Control Council, and

206.3 Has been approved by the State Board.

207 **ALLOW AGRICULTURAL BURNING:** For the purposes of this rule, a person shall be deemed to have allowed agricultural burning if such burning:

207.1 Occurs on land under his or her control, e.g., owned or leased land, and

207.2 Is conducted by:

a. An employee, agent, licensee, or invitee of the person; or

b. Any other person on the land who has been given permission to conduct agricultural burning by any individual identified in Subsection 207.2(a) above.

208 **APPROVED IGNITION DEVICE:** Any instrument or material that will ignite agricultural burning, where the instrument or material produces a flame, but does not produce black smoke, and the flame is then used for ignition. This includes flares or burners fueled by liquid petroleum gas, butane, or propane, or other similar instruments or materials approved by the Air Pollution Control Officer. This does not include tires or tar-containing materials.

209 **DESIGNATED AGENCY:** Any agency, including the District, designated by the State Board as having authority to issue agricultural burning permits and special permits. For the purposes of this section, the Air Pollution Control Officer shall act on behalf of the District.

210 **FOREST MANAGEMENT:** Forestry practices including:

210.1 The removal of forest debris, or

210.2 Timber operations, silviculture, or forest protection practices.

211 **IMMINENT AND SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC LOSS:** The loss of a planting season or irreparable harm to a crop.

212 **IRRIGATION SYSTEM:** A system, including river levees, for the delivery of water for the following purposes:

212.1 Agribusiness, or

212.2 Forest management, or

212.3 Range improvement, or

212.4 The improvement of land for wildlife and game habitat.

213 **IRRIGATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT:** The operation and maintenance of an irrigation system, including, but not limited to, disease and pest prevention, weed abatement, and levee maintenance.

214 **NO-BURN DAY:** Any day on which agricultural burning is prohibited by the State Board or the Air Pollution Control Officer.

215 **OPEN OUTDOOR FIRE:** Any combustion of combustible material of any type that occurs outdoors and is not in any enclosure. In addition, the products of such combustion are not directed through a flue.

216 **PAPER CONTAINERS OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS:** Sacks or other receptacles that are:

216.1 Made predominantly of paper; and

216.2 Manufactured to contain pesticides, fertilizers, or toxic substances; and

216.3 Empty and used in the field for purposes intimately related to the growing and harvesting of crops.
PERMIT HOLDER: A person who has applied for and received from the designated agency approval or conditional approval of an agricultural burning permit or a special permit.

PERMISSIVE BURN DAY: Any day other than a no-burn day.

POPULATED AREA: Any territory in the District that is within:

1. An incorporated city; or
2. An area where sewerage is collected through a sewer system and treated by either:
   a. A governmental agency, such as the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District, or
   b. A community association.

PRESCRIPTED BURNING: The planned application of fire to vegetation on lands selected in advance of such application, where any of the purposes of the burning are specified in the definition of agricultural burning in Section 204.

PRE-TREATED: Felled, cut, crushed, uprooted, desiccated with herbicides, or dead.

RANGE IMPROVEMENT: The removal of vegetation for a wildlife, game, or livestock habitat improvement; or for the initial establishment of an agricultural practice on previously uncultivated land.

SENSITIVE RECEPTOR: A school, day care facility, hospital, health care facility, convalescent home, senior residence facility, park, or similar land use identified by the Air Pollution Control Officer.

SPECIAL PERMIT: An agricultural burning permit issued pursuant to Section 402 that authorizes agricultural burning (pursuant to Sections 304.1, 305.5, 306.5, or 310.2) not otherwise authorized by this rule or by the State Board.

STATE BOARD: The California Air Resources Board or any person authorized to act on its behalf.

TIMBER OPERATIONS: The cutting or removal of timber or other forest vegetation.

WILD LAND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT: The use of prescribed burning conducted by a public agency, or through a cooperative agreement or contract involving a public agency, to burn land predominantly covered with chaparral (as defined in Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 1561.1), trees, grass, or standing brush.

STANDARDS

BURNING PROHIBITION ON NO-BURN DAYS: A person shall not ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning on a no-burn day, except as authorized by Section 304 or 312.2.

BURNING PERMIT REQUIREMENT:

302.1 On either a permissive burn day or a no-burn day, a person shall not ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning without first obtaining approval, pursuant to Section 402, of:

a. A special permit—for the types of agricultural burning required to have a special permit by Section 304.1, 305.5, 306.5, or 310.2; or
b. An agricultural burning permit—for all other types of agricultural burning not specifically required by this rule to have a special permit.

Such person, or his/her representative, shall have the permit available for inspection at the burn site during the burning operation authorized by the permit.
302.2 A person shall not burn any material that is not clearly described in the permit authorizing the burn.

302.3 Except as otherwise provided by this rule, neither an approved agricultural burning permit nor an approved special permit shall:
   a. Be valid for any time period when agricultural burning is prohibited by either the State Board or the Air Pollution Control Officer, or
   b. Authorize agricultural burning that has been restricted by the Air Pollution Control Officer pursuant to Section 305.2, or
   c. Exempt a permit holder or any other person from any:
      1. Fire control or prevention statute, rule, or regulation; or
      2. Prohibition of agricultural burning by a public fire control agency.
   d. Exempt a permit holder or any other person from public nuisance laws and regulations.

303 PERMIT CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL: Any person who ignites, conducts, or allows agricultural burning shall comply with the conditions of approval set forth in the agricultural burning permit or the special permit authorizing the burn.

304 AGRICULTURAL BURNING ON A NO-BURN DAY:
304.1 Notwithstanding the permit statement required by Section 403, a person may ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning on a no-burn day if:
   a. The designated agency determines that denial of permission to burn would pose imminent and substantial economic loss, as defined in Section 211, and
   b. The designated agency approves or conditionally approves a special permit authorizing such burning on a no-burn day.

304.2 In authorizing such burning, the designated agency:
   a. Shall limit the amount of acreage that may be burned in any one day, and
   b. Shall only authorize such burning when any downwind populated areas are forecast by the District, or the District’s designated agent, to achieve the State and federal ambient air quality standards.

305 STANDARDS FOR ALL TYPES OF AGRICULTURAL BURNING: Except as indicated, the following requirements pertain to all types of agricultural burning identified in Section 204:

305.1 ACREAGE ALLOTMENT: The acreage within the District that is available for agricultural burning on permissive burn days is, and shall not exceed, the acreage allotment determined pursuant to the Agricultural Burning Plan.

305.2 PERMISSIVE BURN DAY RESTRICTIONS: Relative to permissive burn days, the Air Pollution Control Officer may restrict agricultural burning to less than the State-allotted acreage identified in Section 305.1 or may declare a no-burn day in all or part of the District if:
   a. Meteorological conditions would:
      1. Cause an undue amount of emissions from agricultural burning to be transported to a sensitive receptor or into a populated area, or
      2. Cause agricultural burning to be a nuisance prohibited by Rule 402—NUISANCE; or
   b. In conjunction with present or predicted meteorology, agricultural burning on a permissive burn day could cause or contribute to a violation of a State or federal ambient air quality standard—including the State visibility standard and a State or federal particulate matter standard.

305.3 WIND DIRECTION: No person shall ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning when the wind direction is such that smoke from the burn will cause or does cause a nuisance prohibited by Rule 402—NUISANCE.

305.4 CONTACT FOR PERMISSION TO BURN: No permit holder shall ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning unless, prior to the burn, on the same day as the burn, the permit holder:
a. Contacts both the designated agency and the fire protection agency having jurisdiction over the burn location.

b. Provides the following information to both agencies:
   1. The number of the permit authorizing the burn,
   2. The location of the proposed burn,
   3. The type of material to be burned,
   4. The acreage or tonnage to be burned,
   5. The length of time the material to be burned has been drying, and
   6. The time of the proposed burn.

c. Requests and receives verbal permission to conduct the burn from both agencies.

305.5 IGNITION REQUIREMENTS: Except as otherwise directed by the fire protection agency having jurisdiction:

a. Agricultural burning shall be:
   1. Ignited with an approved ignition device, as defined in Section 208, and
   2. Ignited as rapidly as practicable.

b. Field crop stubble, including rice, barley, oat, and wheat straw, shall be ignited only by the following methods, as defined in the Agricultural Burning Plan:
   1. strip-firing into the wind, or
   2. backfiring.

c. Ignition methods other than those specified in paragraph (b) of Section 305.5 may be authorized by special permit:
   1. When and where a public fire protection agency has declared that an extreme fire hazard exists, or
   2. Where the designated agency has determined that the crops do not lend themselves to strip-firing into the wind or backfiring.

305.6 IGNITION HOURS:

a. Except as provided in Subsections (b), (c), (d), or (e) of this Section 305.6, a person shall not ignite agricultural burning:
   1. Earlier than 10:00 AM.
   2. Later than 5:00 PM (or one hour prior to sunset, whichever is earlier).

b. From September 15 through November 30, a person shall not ignite agricultural burning earlier than 10:00 AM or later than 3:00 PM.

c. A fire protection agency may modify these ignition hours for fire safety purposes.

d. The Air Pollution Control Officer may modify these ignition hours if:
   1. Meteorological conditions would:
      a) Cause an undue amount of emissions from agricultural burning to be transported to a sensitive receptor or into a populated area, or
      b) Cause agricultural burning to be a nuisance prohibited by Rule 402—NUISANCE; or
   2. In conjunction with present or predicted meteorology, agricultural burning on a permissive burn day could cause or contribute to a violation of a State or federal ambient air quality standard—including the State visibility standard and a State or federal particulate matter standard.

e. The Air Pollution Control Officer may modify these ignition hours in accordance with the Agricultural Burning Plan.

305.7 PROHIBITED MATERIALS: None of the following materials shall ever be burned as part of any type of agricultural burning:
a. Plastic; rubber; synthetic rubber; ornamental or landscape vegetation; shop wastes; construction material; demolition debris; garbage; rubbish; oil filters; tires; tar, tar paper, or other tar-containing materials; petroleum waste; flammable liquid waste; livestock bedding; metal; or motor vehicles.

b. Any material used for packing or processing agricultural products including, but not limited to, broken boxes, pallets, packaging material, or packing boxes.

c. Containers of agricultural chemicals, except for empty paper containers of agricultural chemicals (see Sections 204.9, 216, and 312).

### 306 SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR BURNING AGRIBUSINESS WASTE AND AGRIBUSINESS-RELATED WASTE:

#### 306.1 ARRANGEMENT OF WASTE: A person shall not ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning to dispose of either agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste unless the waste is physically arranged to burn with a minimum of smoke.

#### 306.2 DRYING TIME: The minimum drying time prior to burning agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste shall be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material to Be Burned</th>
<th>Minimum Drying Period Prior to Burning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trees, tree stumps, and large branches greater than 6 inches in diameter</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunings and small branches less than or equal to 6 inches in diameter, vines, or bushes</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry grass and dry cereal stubble or straw—other than rice straw</td>
<td>0 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-harvest rice straw that has been spread</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-harvest rice straw that has been rowed</td>
<td>10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-harvest rice straw that passes the crackle test in Section 306.3</td>
<td>0 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-harvest spread or rowed rice straw at the end of a rain greater than 0.15 inches</td>
<td>As much time as is necessary for the straw to pass the crackle test in Section 306.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residue from field crops cut in a green condition</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other materials or burning for disease and pest prevention</td>
<td>As much time as the designated agency determines is necessary to assure rapid and complete combustion with a minimum of smoke.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 306.3 CRACKLE TEST: To check the moisture content of rice straw in a rice straw field proposed for burning, a permit holder shall select a composite sample of rice straw from under the mat, in the center of the mat, and from different areas in the field. The sample size from each area shall be a handful of rice straw. Rice straw shall be dry enough to burn—i.e., it shall pass the “crackle test”—if each such handful-sized sample from the field makes an audible crackle when bent sharply.
306.4 **MECHANICAL RICE STRAW SPREADERS VS. ROWS:** Pursuant to the Agricultural Burning Guidelines in Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, a mechanical spreader shall be used in rice harvesting to ensure an even distribution of the straw. However, rice straw may be left in rows provided it meets the drying criteria in Section 306.2 prior to being burned.

306.5 **FIELD CROP BURNING DURING THE FALL RICE STRAW BURNING PERIOD:** During the period of October 1 through November 15 of each year, a person shall not burn field crop acreage, other than rice straw acreage, that was harvested prior to September 10, unless the person obtains approval of a special permit for, and prior to, the burn, pursuant to Section 402. In approving the special permit, the designated agency shall:
   a. Ensure that the amount of acreage which is to be burned is in the District's allotment specified in Section 305.1.
   b. Require a specific explanation in writing of the agricultural practices that require immediate burning.
   c. Require the person to specify in writing why the burning was not conducted prior to October 1.
   d. Require the exception to be valid only on permissive burn days.

306.6 **NORTHWEST SACRAMENTO:** On days when the Air Pollution Control Officer or the affected fire protection agency predicts that winds will be from any direction within 90 degrees of true north, no person shall ignite, conduct, or allow the burning of either agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste in the northwest Sacramento area having the following boundary:
   Commencing at a point where the Sacramento and American Rivers merge; then north along the Sacramento River to the point where the river intersects the Sacramento-Sutter County borderline; then east along said Sacramento-Sutter County borderline to a point where said line intersects the main railroad line of the Western Pacific Railroad, which line runs north from the City of Sacramento to Sutter County; then south along said railroad line to a point where intersection is made with the city limits of the City of Sacramento; then easterly and southerly along such city limits to their intersection with the American River; then west along the American River to the point of beginning.

306.7 **NORTHWEST SACRAMENTO BURNING EXCEPTION:** The designated agency may authorize a permit holder to ignite, conduct, or allow the burning prohibited by Section 306.6 if the burning is verbally authorized pursuant to Section 305.4, and:
   a. Is necessary to preclude hazards on public thoroughfares or at airports due to smoke, or
   b. Can be performed without causing a nuisance prohibited by Rule 402—NUISANCE.

306.8 **PROHIBITED MATERIALS:** A person conducting agricultural burning to dispose of agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste:
   a. Shall burn only agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste, and
   b. Shall burn only those materials that are reasonably free of excessive dirt, soil, and visible surface moisture.

306.9 **ON-SITE BURNING REQUIRED:** All agricultural burning to dispose of agribusiness waste or agribusiness-related waste must occur on the property where the material being burned was grown, raised, or, in the case of agribusiness-related waste, used.

307 **SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT BURNING:**

307.1 Waste materials to be burned in a forest management burn shall be dried for a minimum period specified by the designated agency.

307.2 Waste to be burned shall be windrowed or piled where possible, unless good silvicultural practice dictates otherwise.

307.3 Piled waste shall be prepared so that it will burn with a minimum of smoke.

307.4 Piled waste shall be reasonably free of dirt and soil.
SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR RANGE IMPROVEMENT BURNING: Range improvement burning shall be authorized as follows:

308.1 Brush shall be pre-treated at least 6 months prior to the burn if economically and technically feasible.

308.2 All unwanted trees over six (6) inches in diameter shall be felled and allowed to dry at least 6 weeks prior to the burn.

308.3 The Department of Fish and Game may specify the amount of treatment required, provided the burn is for wildlife habitat improvement.

SPECIFIC STANDARD FOR BURNING TO IMPROVE LAND FOR WILDLIFE AND GAME HABITAT: If agricultural burning is done primarily to improve land for wildlife habitat or game habitat, the permit holder shall file with the designated agency a statement from the Department of Fish and Game certifying that the burn is desirable and proper.

SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR IRRIGATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT BURNING:

310.1 The burn area of any agricultural burning undertaken to facilitate the operation or maintenance of an irrigation system shall be free of the materials listed in Section 203.2.

310.2 A person shall not ignite, conduct, or allow agricultural burning to facilitate the operation or maintenance of an irrigation system without first obtaining approval, pursuant to Section 402, of a special permit for the burn, if the burn is to occur either:

   a. During the period of October 1 through November 15 of each year, or
   b. Within a populated area.

SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR WILD LAND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT BURNING:

311.1 Vegetation to be burned shall be in a condition that will facilitate combustion and minimize the amount of smoke emitted during combustion.

311.2 For wild land vegetation management burning projects exceeding 10 acres in size, or for wild land vegetation management burning projects situated in the zone described in Section 306.6, the following information—in addition to the information set forth in the burning permit application—shall be provided to the designated agency for review and approval 30 days in advance of the proposed burning:

   a. The location and specific objectives of the burn project;
   b. The acreage or tonnage, type and arrangement of wild land vegetation to be burned;
   c. The directions and distances to nearby sensitive receptor areas;
   d. The fuel condition, combustion, and meteorological prescription elements developed for the burn;
   e. The projected schedule and duration of project ignition, combustion, and burn down;
   f. The specifications for monitoring and verifying critical project parameters; and
   g. The specifications for disseminating project information—i.e., notification of the public, the designated agency, the fire protection agency having jurisdiction, and other affected agencies of the time, date, location, and acreage of the proposed burn.

SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR BURNING EMPTY PAPER CONTAINERS OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS:

312.1 No open outdoor fires for the disposal of paper containers of agricultural chemicals shall occur unless:

   a. Such burning is conducted where the containers are emptied in the field, and
b. Such burning will not create a nuisance prohibited by Rule 402—NUISANCE, and

c. The containers have been emptied according to the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Department of Pesticide Regulation’s Guidelines for Emptying and Burning of Pesticide Bags, as amended from time to time, and

d. The containers are burned according to the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Department of Pesticide Regulation’s Guidelines for Emptying and Burning of Pesticide Bags, as amended from time to time;

312.2 Provided the requirements of Section 312.1 are met, open outdoor fires for the disposal of empty paper containers of agricultural chemicals may occur on either:
a. A permissive burn day, or
b. A no-burn day, notwithstanding the permit statement required by Section 403.

400 ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

401 PERMIT APPLICATION INFORMATION: Persons applying for either an agricultural burning permit or a special permit required by this rule shall provide the following information to the designated agency:

401.1 The applicant’s name, address, and telephone number; and

401.2 The location of the proposed burn; and

401.3 The acreage (for field crops) or estimated tonnage of material to be burned; and

401.4 The nature of the waste to be burned.

402 BURNING PERMITS:

402.1 The designated agency may approve, or may conditionally approve, an agricultural burning permit or a special permit if:

a. The proposal described in the permit application will, in fact, be agricultural burning.

b. The designated agency has reasonable cause to believe that the permit applicant will comply with the terms of the permit; this rule; and other laws, regulations, and State guidelines governing agricultural burning.

402.2 An agricultural burning permit that has been approved pursuant to Section 402.1 shall:

a. Be valid—except as otherwise specified by this rule—through the next June 30 following the date of such approval.

b. Authorize agricultural burning only at the location for which the permit is approved or conditionally approved.

402.3 A special permit that has been approved pursuant to Section 402.1 shall:

a. Set forth the special conditions (if any) under which the requested activity shall occur.

b. Authorize only one occasion of agricultural burning only at the location for which the special permit is approved.

403 PERMIT STATEMENT: The District’s agricultural burning permit form or special permit form shall contain the following statement: “Except as otherwise specified by the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District’s Rule 501—AGRICULTURAL BURNING, this permit is valid only on those days during which agricultural burning is not prohibited by the California Air Resources Board or by the Air Pollution Control Officer of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.”

404 REQUEST FOR ADVANCE NOTICE:

404.1 Pursuant to paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of Section 80110, Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, the permit holder for a range improvement burn, forest management burn, or wild land vegetation management burn, may ask the State Board to:
a. Issue a 72-hour outlook for a permissive burn/no-burn.
b. Provide advance (up to 48 hours) daily notices of a permissive burn/no-burn.

404.2 The permit holder shall make this request:
   a. Through the designated agency.
   b. Seven days prior to the proposed burn.

405 **PERMIT SUSPENSION/REVOCATION:** A permit approved pursuant to this rule may be suspended or revoked in accordance with the same provisions as those for stationary sources in Division 26, Part 4, Chapter 4, Article 1, of the California Health and Safety Code.

406 **FORWARDING PERMIT INFORMATION:** A designated agency shall forward the permit information received from applicants to the Air Pollution Control Officer upon request.

407 **FIRE PROTECTION AGENCY MANDATES:** All agricultural burning authorized pursuant to this rule shall be subject to any requirements, restrictions, or prohibitions of the fire protection agency having jurisdiction over the burn site.