

ANALYSIS OF HB 1726

*House Agriculture & Ecology Committee
1997*

February 10,

BACKGROUND:

Outdoor burning refers to both "backyard" burning and to landclearing fires. Outdoor burning does not include silvicultural burning (slashburns) or agricultural burning. Pollutants emitted by outdoor burns are PM-10 (inhalable particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter) and carbon monoxide. Outdoor burning contributes an estimated 6 percent to statewide air emissions. In general, state law regulates where and how outdoor burning can occur and what can be burned.

Outdoor burning is permanently prohibited in areas where federal PM-10 or carbon monoxide standards are violated. These areas include the greater Spokane, Yakima, and Olympia areas and the Tacoma tidflats, the Duwamish valley, and the Kent valley. Outdoor burning is temporarily prohibited in any area experiencing a period of impaired air quality. State law prohibits outdoor burning by December 31, 2000, in urban growth areas designated under the Growth Management Act or in cities greater than 10,000 population if air standards may be exceeded and if alternatives to burning are reasonably available.

State law allows prunings, clippings, and other natural vegetative material to be burned. Ecology rules allow paper to be burned only in quantities sufficient to start a fire and, specifically prohibit the burning of cardboard, untreated wood, garbage, and other materials.

The federal Clean Air Act requires a state implementation plan for areas that do not meet, or have not met, federal air quality standards. These plans must identify enforceable actions that will reduce air pollution sufficiently to meet federal air quality standards. Many of these plans include outdoor burning bans as one action to reduce air pollution. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has final approval of state implementation plans.

SUMMARY:

Outdoor burning is allowed in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards for PM-10 and carbon monoxide if the burning is conducted solely for managing debris. The entity with permitting jurisdiction will decide if burning will be permitted. A permit is required and a fee may be charged to recover the costs of administering the permit. All restrictions on what can be burned remain unchanged.