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-For Immediate Release-

Open burning requires planning and caution

As the local weather begins to heat up and dry out fire officials are urging residents to practice planning and caution when considering open fires. Because open fires pollute the air and can pose serious fire hazards, there are laws in effect concerning what types of material can be burned and when they can be burned.

“Anytime you are conducting an open burn it’s important that you contact the Sterling Emergency Communications Center (522-3512)”, said Sterling Fire Chief Kurt Vogel. “This forewarning gives us important information if someone calls in to report smoke, and it also gives us an opportunity to intercede if there are any potential hazards. Those hazards could include the type of materials being burned or the current weather conditions, particularly if there is a red flag warning in place.”

A red flag warning is a forecast warning issued by the U.S. National Weather Service to inform fire agencies and the general public that there is a high fire danger. In 2009 Logan County adopted the Logan County Red Flag Burning Restriction Ordinance which prohibits open burning on red flag warning days. Failure to comply could result in criminal prosecution. The entire ordinance can be viewed online at www.sterlingcolo.com on the fire department’s page.

In addition to knowing when you can burn Vogel also stressed that it’s important to know what types of materials you can burn.

The state of Colorado regulates open burning to help protect the public’s health and the environment. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, open burning is the burning of any material or substance, including rubbish, wastepaper, wood, vegetative material or any other flammable material, in the ambient air on any open premises. Generally anytime you light a fire outdoors you are open burning.

Burning wood and vegetative products can produce harmful chemicals including carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and formaldehyde. Burning plastics, tires, chemically treated wood products and other man-made materials also produce air pollution and releases toxic chemicals into the air. These air pollutants can irritate the eyes, nose and lungs and pose a threat to those who suffer from asthma and other respiratory conditions. Because of this Colorado requires the use of a burning permit for any business or resident that wishes to conduct burning that is not exempt from state regulations.

State regulations indicate that unless you meet one of the following exemptions, you must obtain a burn permit from the Air Pollution Control Division at the state health department:

- Non-commercial burning of private household trash which includes paper, cardboard, and untreated wood products. Household trash does **not** include food wastes, plastics, coated or treated wood products, rubber, tree limbs, shrub and garden trimmings, or other vegetation.;
- Fires used for noncommercial cooking of food;
- Fires used for instructional, training, or recreational purposes;
- Safety flares used to signal danger;
- Agricultural open burning.

There is no charge to obtain a state open burning permit and the application can be found online at www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/downpermitforms/ApplicationOpenBurning.doc. Permits can be submitted by email, fax or mail.

“The most important thing to remember is to contact the fire department before you burn,” continued Vogel. “We can help you determine at that time if there are any issues with the materials you wish to burn or if the weather conditions are not favorable. Fire is very dangerous and in hot, dry and windy conditions it can spread very quickly, igniting nearby trees, brush and homes. The last thing we want to see is anyone get hurt or someone’s property damaged that may have been prevented by a simple phone call.”

For more information call your local fire department or the Communications Center at 522-3512. You can also visit <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/coenfor.html> for more information on open burning.