



DOMESTIC BURNING

Legislation for accountability!

Burning: a risk for forests



On average, 27 % of fires reported in April and May to SOPFEU are caused by domestic fires. Many owners use fire to clear their property, without thinking that they are putting the forest at risk. It is important to know that fuels dry quickly at that time of year.

Several local municipalities allow domestic burning at specific hours. Some require a permit and damage insurance, whereas others prohibit them at all times.

Permits : a tool for the municipality

Even if they are not mandatory under the Forest Act, permits help the local municipality to control *domestic burning*. They not only make it possible to reduce the risk of fire spreading to the forest and neighbouring properties, but also make the job of municipal fire fighters easier.

Recommendation

SOPFEU recommends that domestic burning be legislated in local municipalities.

For this purpose, the appendix contains an example of a by-law for burning, which may be adapted as need be.

Legislation for accountability

By-laws for burning within a local municipality help remind citizens that they also have responsibilities when it comes to preventing forest fires, such as :

- Knowing which by-laws are in effect;
- Notifying municipal officials of their intention to burn;
- Getting a permit before starting the fire;
- Keeping a constant eye on the fire until it is completely extinguished;
- Having the necessary equipment and personnel to control and extinguish the fire.

Example of a by-law for burning

WHEREAS it is permissible for any municipal corporation to adopt by-laws for preventing fires;

WHEREAS certain owners whose properties are located at the limits of the municipality are sometimes forced to use fire for getting rid of dry hay, straw, dry grass, wood heaps, brush, branches, trees or shrubs, slash, plants, tree trunks or other fuels;

WHEREAS certain people, for the purpose of keeping mosquitoes away or livening up a picnic or outdoor party, decide to light a campfire;

WHEREAS these fires often present serious risks for personal property;

WHEREAS these fires must be subject to uniform and clear legislation;

FOR THESE REASONS:

It is proposed and unanimously resolved that this by-law be adopted and numbered _____ and that the following be decreed:

SECTION 1

The above preamble is an integral part of this by-law.

SECTION 2

Within municipal lines, no person shall light a fire or allow it to continue to burn in a private or public area without having obtained a permit from the municipality beforehand, unless it is a wood fire lit in a fireplace especially designed for this purpose, and that there is no ban on open fires in effect for safety reasons, either by the Government of Québec or its representatives, or the municipality itself.

SECTION 3

Only the following fires are allowed and under the following conditions:

- 3.1 Fires in outdoor cooking devices such as fireplaces, barbecues and other equipment designed for this purpose;
- 3.2 Fires in metal containers such as barrels or others with covers protecting against sparks;
- 3.3 Fires lit on mineral soil and whose perimeter is free of any plant material;
- 3.4 For farmers, straw or hay fires when authorized by the fire chief;
- 3.5 Industrial burning that is duly authorized. For example, fires lit for the purpose of getting rid of woody material when an area is cleared to make way for a road, power transmission line, new building or any industrial or commercial type of work. The Forest Act requires that for these types of burning a permit be issued by the

organization responsible for fire protection, i.e. the Société de protection des forêts contre le feu (SOPFEU).

SECTION 4

No activity using fire or fireworks shall be allowed within municipal lines unless the person in charge of this activity has obtained prior permission from the fire chief.

SECTION 5

- 5.1 Every person contravening this by-law shall be liable to a fine of \$ _____ plus costs;
- 5.2 Every person contravening this by-law for a second time shall be liable to a fine of \$ _____ plus costs;
- 5.3 Every person contravening this by-law for a third and subsequent time shall be liable to a fine of \$ _____ plus costs.

SECTION 6

This by-law shall come into effect according to law.