



Commonly Asked Questions about DNR Investigations of Wildland Forest Fires

Washington's Department of Natural Resources fights wildfires on state-owned and private forests across the state. Our fire investigators search out the causes of these fires and address the costs associated with firefighting efforts. The following are commonly asked questions we've received over the years that deal with wildland forest fire investigations and fire suppression cost recovery.

What does DNR do about wild land forest fires?

We investigate the origin and cause of all human caused wildfires that occur within the department's authority. We determine who is responsible for the cause of the fire; charge them in criminal court, if relevant, and may seek to recover the suppression costs associated with the fire from the responsible party.

How does DNR investigate wildland fires?

The department's fire investigators are trained to apply technical skills and a set of standardized scientific methodologies, procedures, and practices that have been peer-reviewed and have received general acceptance by the profession to determine how a fire affects objects in its path.

The Investigator reviews the fire's directional vectors and determines how and where the fire's fuels were first ignited and combustion was sustained.

Does the money that the department recovers go back into DNR's budget?

No. The funds recovered by the department for costs associated with the suppression of a fire go into Washington State's general fund.

Can I receive a citation or be arrested for causing a wildland forest fire?

Yes. Depending upon the circumstances you could be criminally cited and/or arrested for negligently or criminally causing a wildland forest fire.

Where can I go to learn more about outdoor burning rules and regulations?

Call **1-800-323-BURN** prior to burning. Follow the links on our "Links" page at this site to Title 76 RCW and Chapter 332-24 WAC. That will get you started. Also, feel free to drop by at one of the department's six region offices or the department's state headquarters in Olympia for more information regarding outdoor burning.

Or visit our webpage:

www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Topics/FireBurningRegulations/Pages/rp_burn_fireburnfuelmgt.aspx

Who would I call to get more information about the fire investigation and cost recovery program?

Call the DNR Resource Protection Division's receptionist (**360-902-1300**). The receptionist will refer you to an individual who should be able to answer your questions.