



For Immediate Release:

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ADEM Addresses Burning of Storm Debris

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) has received comments about the large amount of smoke generated from the open burning of storm debris. This smoke has the potential to affect many Alabama residents that have already been impacted by the recent tornadoes.

Various state agencies, including ADEM, have received requests from local governments to control this open burning. Heavy smoke from open burning can degrade air quality and cause respiratory problems for many individuals. In addition, the resulting ash from burning materials other than vegetation and untreated wood has the potential to create adverse environmental impacts that could mandate further cleanup.

The Department is aware that there is a large amount of downed vegetation that cannot be turned into firewood, lumber, or wood chips and will eventually have to be handled. Currently, ADEM allows the burning of vegetation and untreated wood in response to a natural disaster. All other storm-related debris must be recycled or disposed of in a permitted landfill.

ADEM requests that local governments, who are frequently working in conjunction with FEMA, establish isolated burning sites for the collection and burning of vegetation and untreated wood. However, the Department is aware that many Alabama residents will be unable to utilize these isolated burning sites and must get rid of the downed vegetation on their properties with no outside help.

The open burning of “green” vegetation, which has not dried, creates more smoke and takes longer to burn than dry vegetation. For those individuals who need to burn vegetative debris ADEM recommends holding off for three to four months until the debris is dry and will burn quickly. This act will decrease the likelihood of the resulting smoke causing a nuisance for other citizens.

In the event you have questions about open burning you may contact ADEM at (334) 271-7861.

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