

Snow Doesn't Guarantee Fire Safety. Here's What You Need To Know.



Safety Advisory: Burning With Snow on the Ground

There's a common belief that burning when snow is on the ground is the safest way to conduct open burning. That's only partially true. Snow can reduce fire risk, but it does **not** guarantee safety. Burning is **relatively** safe only when the snow cover is deep, the ground is frozen, winds are light, and the forecast calls for several days of consistently low temperatures to keep that snow in place.

A light, temporary snowfall does **not** make burning brush piles safe. If you want to rely on snow as a safety buffer, you generally need several inches of lasting snow and cold, stable weather. Here's why:

Shallow snow isn't enough insulation to stop heat from reaching dry grass or leaf litter underneath.

Brush piles burn hot, quickly melting thin snow and exposing dry fuels almost immediately.

If the snow disappears the same day, the ground is likely not frozen, allowing fire to creep or smolder.

Embers can travel, landing on exposed areas once the snow melts.

Bottom line, you must use just as much caution when open burning with snow on the ground as you would under normal conditions. You must monitor weather conditions, have equipment (shovel, spade, water bucket) nearby, stay vigilant and monitor the fire until it is safely out, then check again every four hours to ensure it has not reignited.

Phillips County Emergency Management

