

VILLAGE OF TINLEY PARK
Frequently Asked Questions About Prescribed Burns
March, 2016

1. Why are prescribed burns necessary?

Prescribed burns (also known as controlled burns) are a very important land management tool utilized to achieve several objectives:

- a. Reduce the spread of undesirable weeds and woody vegetation;
- b. Promote the growth of more desirable, native plants;
- c. Enrich the soil and make sunlight more available to the ground by burning off dead vegetation on the ground and returning nutrients. This encourages growth of new plants.

The Village of Tinley Park utilizes this management technique by hiring trained, professional burn crews. Prescribed burns are used widely by land managers throughout the Midwest and the country by federal, state and local municipalities. Without the use of prescribed fire, naturalized areas are far more likely to become overrun by thickets of invasive shrubs or weeds with little variety of plant and animal life.

2. When do burns take place?

Burns are conducted in the early spring and late fall when vegetation is dormant. Trained crews carefully time the burn for a specific range of temperature, wind direction, wind strength, humidity, barometric pressure and ground moisture conditions in order to ensure safety and to minimize smoke emission. Burn dates are always subject to change depending on whether or not conditions for a safe and effective burn are present.

3. How does the burn process work?

Burn permits are issued by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Once the permit is issued, a professional prescribed burn manager prepares a burn prescription plan specific to each site. The burn plan specifies areas targeted for the burn, ignition patterns, the location of firebreaks, ideal weather conditions, number of staff and type of equipment needed. Only professional, well-equipped, fully trained burn crews carry out the prescribed burns under the supervision of the prescribed burn manager. On the day of the burn, the crews carry cell phones and two-way radios. Water tanks and a water truck are also present the day of the burn. Flyers are distributed to adjacent neighbors when necessary. Signs are posted at the burn site during the burn. On the day of the burn, the contractor notifies the

fire departments and city officials. Fire departments are called at the beginning and end of each burn.

4. Does a burn kill all of the plants and animals?

Burns do not harm native herbaceous plants because their root systems extend deep into the ground. Woody plants that could be harmed are protected by using exclusion zones around them – areas that will not be burned. Animals can avoid the burn by moving to another area, retreating into burrows or flying away.

5. How will the burn site look after a burn?

Recently burned areas initially look scorched and void of vegetation, but the sites will green up very quickly in the spring. Burns encourage more vigorous growth, so during the season following a controlled burn the vegetation thrives, benefitting from the rejuvenated soil and ample sunlight.