



Tallgrass Restoration Rx Fire FAQ

Why?

Prescription, or controlled burning, is implemented for a variety of reasons. Most notably it is used to maintain the health of existing, restored and created natural areas containing native plants. Fire helps manage some weeds and woody growth, restores nutrients to the soil, promotes new growth and reduces wildfire hazards. Burns are most commonly performed in natural communities such as prairies, woodlands and wetlands. Other times fire may be used to clear vegetation from an area in order to facilitate installation work or vegetation management in the spring.

Who?

Tallgrass Restoration employs many professionals with varying credentials for performing prescription burns. All of our burns are led by staff that is certified through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) as Prescribed Burn Managers. Other certifications include National Wildfire Coordinating Group and Chicago Wilderness. At a minimum our employees attain the Chicago Wilderness Midwest Ecological Burn Crew Member Certification within their first year of employment. Tallgrass Restoration, LLC is fully bonded and insured to perform this service.

When?

Spring and Fall are the two primary burn seasons, but burns can occur at any time from mid October through mid April.

The Spring burn season, which is usually the longer of the two, will typically begin in early to mid March and run through the end of April. We prefer to have wetland and woodland burns completed by April 1st. Prairie burns can be completed well into April in a typical year.

The fall burn season typically begins about two weeks after our first killing frost. We generally have this frost in mid to late October, so the burn season should typically begin around the first of November. The Fall season will usually last until the first snowfall, sometime in the beginning of December.

Depending on the management goals of a burn, burning can take place during the winter as long as conditions are appropriate.

Due to the atmospheric conditions necessary, as well as the limited time frame for completing tasks, burning cannot be accurately scheduled more than one to three days in advance. Often, the decision is made the day of the burn. Conditions that are checked daily for optimal burn weather include:

Temperature - 35° to 70° / Humidity - 30% to 65%

Precipitation - 20% chance or less

Wind Speed & Direction - Generally 5-20mph (Site specific)

Air Quality Index – Must be below 100

Haines Index – 2 to 5

Mixing Height – Preferably above 1,500ft

Ventilation Rate – Preferably higher than 46,000mph-ft

Fuel Composition - Site Specific (Woodland/Prairie/Wetland)

Illinois Office

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Wisconsin Office

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How?

There are a few items that must be completed before a prescription burn can be performed. We cannot begin any of these processes until a contract is signed.

1. Permitting - allow 90-120 days
 - All burns in Illinois require permits from the Illinois EPA. These permits take up to 90 days to acquire, so plan accordingly.
 - Depending on which county you are located in, a county permit may also be required.
 - Some villages and local fire departments/fire prevention districts also require permitting.
2. Planning
 - A prescription burn plan will be created and provided to the client for signature approval. This burn plan will be in accordance with the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act and contain details about the burn as well as maps depicting the burn unit.
3. Notifications
 - Potentially affected neighbors within a reasonable distance will be notified of our intent to burn a minimum of 48 hours prior to the burn event. This is typically done with a flyer that is mailed to all the residences near the burn unit. The Illinois EPA requires all adjacent landowners to be notified of the prescribed burn.

Once these steps are completed, the prescription burn can be scheduled to take place. We will do our best to notify the client at least 18 hours before we intend to burn. If we are able to provide more notice we will. Fire departments and neighbors that have requested to be notified will be contacted the day before the burn is to take place. The morning of the burn we will notify all authorities required (Police/Fire/Dispatch/Village) and proceed with the burn.

What to expect after the burn?

Much of the burn unit should be blackened from the fire, possibly down to bare soil. Our goal for most burns is to blacken at least 70% of the target burn area. However, in most cases not all of the vegetation or leaf litter will be consumed or knocked down by the fire. This is perfectly normal and to be expected. Many beneficial insects overwintering in the burn unit cannot escape the fire and they will require unburned areas to survive. Under your burn contract we will not mow down the remaining standing debris unless specifically stated otherwise.

Cattails: Cattails are a special case in that even when they burn thoroughly they will always leave behind stalks and stubble. More often than not, cattails do not burn completely and may require additional clean-up work in some instances. Cattails growing in low basins, or areas where wind is blocked by buildings/trees may not burn at all. A strong wind is generally required to help move the fire through the cattails.

Typically after a burn, areas will green-up sooner in the spring, and the new growth will be thicker and fuller than previous seasons.