



## **Chapter 9: Backyard Burning** **2009 Addendum**

Chapter 9 of the BVLDC Clean Air Plan addresses emissions from backyard burning. The Plan recognizes that emissions from burning garbage and other materials are much more harmful than those generated from the burning of clean wood and other organic yard wastes (leaves, branches, etc.), however, the strategies proposed in the Plan attempt to reduce emissions from all types of backyard burning. Table 9.1 describes the strategies that were implemented over the past five years, and Table 9.2 reports back on the indicator listed in *Section 9-6* of the Plan.

**Table 9.1: Update of Strategies Implemented 2004-2008**

Goals	Strategies
1. Reduce or eliminate air quality degradation attributable to backyard burning	<p><b>Implement public communications/education strategy to find alternatives.</b></p> <p>In April 2006, AMS developed a brochure for the District of Hazelton on backyard burning. This was mailed out to each household with utility bills. The brochure was reviewed by the Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Environment. This brochure can easily be adapted for other communities.</p> <p><b>Radio and newspaper public service announcements.</b></p> <p>This strategy was not implemented</p> <p><b>Implement backyard burning bylaws.</b></p> <p>In June 2006 the District of Houston passed a bylaw that addressed open burning, backyard burning and wood burning appliances. The bylaw mandates that open burning of debris (including yard and garden waste) can only happen on property lots greater than one acre. Furthermore, the bylaw states that garbage is not allowed to be burned and that burning of <i>recreational fires</i> (ie: campfires) is not allowed during air quality episodes. Finally, operation of a domestic outdoor back yard incinerator is expressly prohibited.</p>

**Table 9.2: Indicator Results**

Goals	Indicators
1. Reduce or eliminate air quality degradation	<p><b>Public complaints.</b></p> <p>The Ministry of Environment has a formal tracking process for all air quality complaints, including back yard burning. However, this emission source is better administered by local</p>

attributable to backyard burning	<p>governments through bylaw development.</p> <p>Between 2004 and 2008 no complaints were received by the Ministry of Environment or the AMS with respect to back yard burning. This suggests that one of the following may be true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Citizens had no complaints during this time with respect to back yard burning</li> <li>- Citizens did have complaints during this time but did not know to call the Ministry of Environment or the AMS</li> <li>- Citizens did have complaints and brought them to the attention of local government offices which dealt with them and did not inform the Ministry of Environment or the AMS.</li> </ul> <p>It is likely that the strategies implemented (bylaw in Houston and newsletter in Hazelton) had a positive effect on local air quality, however, it is very difficult to substantiate this with air quality data. Because complaints have not been registered by the AMS or MOE it is difficult to estimate if results for this chapter have been achieved.</p>
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**Future Direction:**

Most communities in the BVLD airshed have mechanisms (bylaws) to deal with back yard burning. For those that don't, the AMS is always willing to support communities that wish to pursue bylaws or other measures which address this emission source. Because very few complaints are brought to the AMS or MOE related to this source, it is unlikely that any other future action will occur unless either the AMS is requested or emissions from back yard burning becomes a higher profile issue. Given that AMS has adopted a community-based social marketing approach and that there are variations in literacy levels for English and learning and communication styles for residents in the airshed and adjacent jurisdictions, where requested, a special effort will be made to team up with complementary project leaders to integrate education on backyard burning and alternatives.

In the next version of the plan a different indicator should be considered so that results can be more easily measured. The following are potential indicators that could be considered:

- Usage of transfer station compost piles
- Increased bylaw development (number of bylaws that address backyard burning)
- Complaints received, as logged in a more formal complaint tracking system that is coordinated between BVLD communities.