



INFO

Air Quality Concerns with Landscaping Activities

Landscaping activities can make the air in our neighborhoods dirty. Emissions from 2-stroke engines—edgers, trimmers, mowers, blowers—contribute to Spokane’s air quality problems. In addition, fine particles of dust from using leaf blowers to clean hard surfaces create another health and nuisance concern.

Compliance & Enforcement

Spokane Clean Air inspectors respond to many citizen complaints about excessive dust emissions and odors. Inspectors also conduct surveillance throughout the county, and will perform on-the-spot inspections if excessive emissions are observed. Documented violations may result in formal enforcement action, including civil penalties.

It is your responsibility to be aware of clean air regulations before you begin activities that may generate dust or excessive emissions. Not knowing about or understanding dust control requirements is not a defense.

The best way to avoid costly violations is to implement adequate control measures and regularly monitor your operations. Make sure employees and contractors know the requirements for dust control.

Leaf Blowers — Use Responsibly

Leaf blowers are convenient time savers for professional gardeners, landscapers, and maintenance crews. However, using them to blow dirt and debris from sidewalks, driveways and parking areas creates clouds of dust (fine particles) that are harmful when inhaled. Improper use of a leaf blower may lead to a violation of dust regulations, which are outlined on the back of this page. Dust emissions may be reduced by following best practices (courtesy of CA Landscape Contractors Association).

Leaf Blower Best Practices:

- Leaf blowers should be run at half throttle most of the time, to reduce dust and provide operator with maximum control.

- The full nozzle extension should be used so the air stream can work close to the ground.
- Debris should never be blown onto adjacent property, the street, vehicles, people or pets.
- Rakes or brooms should be used to loosen heavier debris.
- Leaf blowers should not be used to move large debris piles from one spot to another.
- If conditions are dry, mister attachments should be used to suppress dust.
- The muffler, air intakes and air filters should be routinely checked to make sure they are working properly.

Additionally, gas powered leaf blowers, and other small engines emit ozone-forming vapors that are also harmful to breathe. Operating a typical gas-powered lawn mower for one hour produces the equivalent amount of smog-forming pollutants as driving an average car about 100 miles. (*U.S. EPA, Outdoor Air, Lawn Equipment*)

Leave the Leaf Blower

Clean up debris effectively on concrete and asphalt surfaces by not using a leaf blower. Consider alternatives that may work best to reduce dust emissions:

- Rakes,
- Brooms, or
- Vacuum-type equipment with dust collection device attachments.

Other Landscaping Activities

Aside from dust issues related to leaf blowers, there are other landscaping activities associated with air pollution.

- Equipment from a job site can pick up and track mud and dirt onto paved roadways;
- Large equipment can generate dust from the moving and dumping of soil; and
- Large diesel powered equipment is often left idling for extended periods of time, creating harmful emissions.

Go Green & Reduce Exhaust

By reducing the exhaust that comes from any type of engine associated with landscaping (motor vehicles, large equipment, small equipment), you will conserve fuel while helping clear the air:

- Implement a No Idle Policy for all engines, when not in active use, turn it off,
- Where feasible, replace gas-powered equipment with battery-powered equipment.

What are the rules for controlling dust emissions?

Specifically, Spokane Clean Air regulations state:

- Particulate matter emissions must be minimized.
- Depositing particulate matter onto the property of others is prohibited.
- Reasonable measures must be taken to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne.
- Precautions must be taken to remove dirt and mud from equipment and vehicles before movement onto paved public roads.
- Dirt and mud tracked onto paved public roadways must be promptly removed.
- Dust emissions must not create a nuisance.

Control Dust

Reasonable precautions are actions taken that prevent and minimize dust emissions. Effective options vary depending upon the situation, however, here are some examples:

- Limiting the power or air speed on a leaf blower to keep dirt from blowing.
- Refraining from using commercial sized blowers that are employed for blowing off large areas.
- Minimize activity during periods of high winds.
- Water or other wetting agents or chemical dust suppressants.
- Vegetate or mulch dusty areas.
- Keep paved surfaces clean to minimize re-entrainment of dust into the air.
- Use covered chutes, containers when transferring dusty material.
- Maintain adequate freeboard and cover loads when transporting dusty materials.
- Clean vehicle tires and undercarriages before traveling on paved roads (wash stations).
- Clean up material that has been tracked onto paved roadways or cease the activity or operation.