

Key Points regarding Proposed temporary burn ban during times of “High Fire Risk”:

1. November of 2024 brought the largest and most numerous wildfires in recent history to the Hudson Valley and Ulster County.
2. Governor Hochul implemented a “burn ban” in mid-November that nevertheless allowed backyard fire pits, contained campfires, and small cooking fires, despite the high fire risk.
3. Many jurisdictions in Ulster County—in fact all, except Kingston—enacted their own burn bans, many of them explicitly strict. Surrounding towns included: New Paltz, Woodstock, Marbletown, Hurley, Town of Ulster. (See attached sheet for actual language.) But Kingston—the most densely populated jurisdiction in the county—failed to do so. What we have learned from experts about the 2025 Los Angeles California wildfire is that fires in densely populated areas are much harder to “steer” and control.
4. Several similarities exist between the cities of Altadena, CA and Kingston: largely wood-frame housing stock; densely sited homes; located in a valley basin, which traps air pollution; both were designated “High Fire Danger” areas at the time of the CA/ Hudson Valley wildfires, respectively.
5. Climate-driven extreme weather events like high winds and increasing dry conditions increase risk.
6. HVAQ members were concerned about the potential threat to property, lives (and health due to worsened air quality) if proactive measures are not put into place. Kingston has, arguably, more risk factors than surrounding communities because of its status as the only city in Ulster County, its large stock of wood frame houses, and its population density.
7. Two letters were sent by HVAQ to Mayor Noble in spring, 2025, asking him to enact strict burn bans during times of DEC-designated “High Fire Danger”. He did not respond, so HVAQ members spoke at the May, 2025 Common Council meeting to ask for legislation to implement a temporary burn ban in times of DEC-designated “High Fire Danger”.
8. **HVAQ Coalition is urging the Common Council to enact a temporary, explicit burn ban on all outdoor burning during times of high fire danger, as designated by the NYS DEC Fire Danger map, suggesting the language used by the Town of Marbletown, as indicated in Slide #3 below.**
<https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/wildfires/fire-danger-map>
9. Dr. Eli Dueker of Bard College addressed the Laws and Rules Committee in October of 2025 to give an overview of the air quality monitoring that has been

conducted here since 2020, and the implications of climate change on potential fire danger.

10. Key Points from his presentation:

Slides 7, 18, 23

Spoilers (key take-aways)

- **We have made it almost 250 years since Kingston burnt down last.**
Let's be sure we make it another 250!
- Climate change is rapidly changing what is “normal.”
- Kingston has taken strong leadership in the realm of HV AQ since 2019.
- When it comes to wildfires, we can learn a lot from other states and jurisdictions. Aside from loss of life and buildings, AQ impacts are devastating.
- Community leadership is key to a resilient community – *can't rely on just one leader anymore*, must act as an informed group of people in the face of uncertainty.
- **Fire is only avoided by *reducing possibilities* when conditions are *fire-prone*.** People need clear and real-time communication about how to do this, particularly in a dense, urban, wood-frame city like Kingston.

So what?

- In the past couple years, California and Canadian wildfire smoke in Kingston has “ignited” community and student interest in learning how to keep Hudson Valley communities safe (both from fire and AQ challenges)
- One Bard social sciences student decided to look into the concept of prescribed burning as a means to limit wildfires nationwide, but then:
 - Burn ban was announced by NY State, but seemed vague
 - Kingston did not declare more detailed safety measures despite high risk, while other municipalities nearby did take action
 - student wanted to know: Why?

Suggested Next Steps

Elevated fire risk conditions have occurred four times in the past year alone: November 2024, March 2025, early September 2025, and NOW).

Instead of taking a “wait and see” approach, we can take action to reduce fire risk overall for Kingston.

Suggested conditions triggering action:

When fire risk is designated as “high” or above as designated by NYS DEC Fire Danger Map:
[Fire Danger Map - NYSDEC.](#)

Suggested action when conditions are met:

The city puts a temporary “burn ban” in effect that prohibits “all outdoor burning, including bonfires, campfires, warming fires, outdoor fireplaces, chimneys, and cooking fires in city limits until further notice.”