

Safety Consideration

The Risk of Burning Oleanders

Oleanders are a popular ornamental shrub commonly used along fence lines, roadways and driveways as a privacy barrier. The shrub thrives with little care and is drought resistant. Oleanders are resistant to light frost but can die when exposed to freezing conditions, specifically at temperatures less than 14 degrees. The extreme cold experienced this past October killed some of the oleanders in our community.

The burning of oleanders is a violation of the Arizona Administrative Code, Title 18, Chapter 2, Article 6.

Oleanders are toxic by ingestion and inhalation. Exposure by ingestion can cause cardiac arrhythmias and gastro intestinal emergencies. All parts of the plant are considered toxic. The toxic components of the oleander are heat resistance, therefore the smoke of burning oleanders is considered hazardous. No part of the oleander plant either green or dried should be burned.



With the lifting of burning restrictions, fire district personnel should remind burn permit holders that burning oleanders is a violation of the permit and potentially dangerous.

Response to fires involving oleanders should be taken seriously. Keep up wind and consider SCBA use if the fire requires close proximity for extinguishment, the fire is large or wind conditions are fluid. Gross decontamination should be considered in incidents where personnel have had direct contact with burned material. Sinus bradycardia and different degrees of atrioventricular block are the most frequent cardiac presentations. Neurological symptoms include tremor, drowsiness and ataxia.

Reference: INCHEM, Chemical Safety Information from Intergovernmental Organizations

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