



City of Fairfax Fire Marshal's Office  
Open Burning/Outside Fire Guidelines  
Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code 2015  
(Rev. 3/2020)

---

**Definitions:**

**Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC)** The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC), simply referred to as the Fire Prevention Code, is a state regulation promulgated by the Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) in cooperation with the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB), both Governor-appointed boards. This code is enforced by the City of Fairfax Fire Marshal's Office.

**Open burning** is the burning of materials wherein the products of combustion are emitted directly into the ambient air without passing through a stack or chimney from an enclosed chamber. Open Burning does not include road flares, smudge pots, Recreational Fires, or the use of Portable Outdoor Fireplaces. Open Burning requires an operational permit under the SFPC, issued by the City of Fairfax Office of Code Administration.

**Bonfire** is a constantly attended outdoor fire utilized primarily for ceremonial purposes that has a fuel area larger than a Recreational Fire; making it greater than 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height. Bonfires require an operational permit under the SFPC, issued by the City of Fairfax Office of Code Administration.

**Recreational Fires** are outdoor fires burning solid materials where the fuel being burned is not contained in an incinerator, outdoor fireplace, portable outdoor fireplace, and barbeque grill or barbeque pit and is less than 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet or less in height.

**Portable Outdoor Fireplaces** also known as patio fireplaces, chimineas, and fire pits, are designed to burn solid fuels and may be purchased from a variety of retailers. They vary in construction from steel, concrete, clay or other noncombustible material and may be open in design, or may be equipped with a small hearth opening and a short chimney.



**Requirements:**

Recreational Fires are used for pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth or similar purposes. These types of fires shall not be used to burn yard waste, yard debris, or ground cover. Recreational Fires shall not be conducted with 25 feet of any structure, combustible material, or areas where conditions would allow the fire to possibly spread.

Portable Outdoor Fireplaces may not be operated within 15 feet of a structure or combustible material, and the manufacturer's instructions must always be followed. The only exception to the distance requirement is when it is used at a one- and two-family dwellings.

Both Recreational Fires and Portable Outdoor Fireplaces have several universal fire safety requirements.

- All Open Burning/Outdoor Fires require property owner permission.

- No fire shall be kindled or authorize to be kindled or maintained in such a manner that will endanger the property of another.
- You shall not burn combustible and noncombustible waste materials including refuse, rubbish, garbage, or trade/construction waste.
- The fire must be constantly attended until it is completely extinguished.
- A means of extinguishment, i.e. portable fire extinguisher (minimum 4A rating), garden hose, water barrel, dirt, or sand, must be immediately available at all times while the fire is burning.

*When Open Burning/Outdoor Fires create or add to a hazardous situation, a required permit for Open Burning has not been obtained, the Fire Department or Fire Marshal is authorized to order extinguishment. Open burning shall be prohibited when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous.*

**Any Outdoor Fire other than Recreational Fires or Portable Outdoor Fireplaces requires approval from the City of Fairfax Fire Marshal's Office/Office of Code Administration. For more information or questions please contact (703) 385-7830**