

# Open Burning and Recreational Fires FAQs

## Virginia Beach Fire Dept. Fire Prevention Bureau

The Fire Prevention Bureau is tasked with inspecting new and existing buildings within the City of Virginia Beach. The main focus when performing inspections is life safety and subsequently building/property safety. The objective of fire inspections is to identify and correct fire and life safety code violations.

## Open Burning and Recreational Fires

This flyer will outline the most common questions associated with having a fire on your property. The difference between a recreational fire/open burning and an outdoor fire place is that the products of combustion either pass through a chimney/stack or do not.

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[www.vbgov.com/fire-prevention](http://www.vbgov.com/fire-prevention)



Q: Can I have a recreational fire in my backyard?

A: Yes, but it must be at least 25 feet from anything that is combustible. It can be no larger than 3' W x 2' H, anything larger will be considered a bonfire and a permit will need to be obtained. You must also have a means to extinguish the fire, such as but not limited to, a garden hose or a portable extinguisher. Other methods of extinguishment are subject to final approval by the Fire Officer on scene. The fire must also be fully extinguished when the event is finished and not left to smolder.

Q: I have some debris on my property, can I burn it?

A: No, only clean dry fire wood can be burned. Trash, pallets, construction debris, and yard clippings may not be burned at any time. If any resident or business has an illegal/improper fire you will be forced to extinguish it upon arrival of Fire Department personnel.

Q: The Fire Department was called and now I have to put out my fire, why?

A: If any complaints are received about the fire creating a smoke nuisance which impacts others in the area the fire must be extinguished for that night. This will be the discretion of the Fire Officer on scene at the time of the incident.



Q: What is a smoke nuisance?

A: A condition that is created by any open burning, even if we have issued a permit, that creates smoke which negatively impacts the community.

Q: Can I have a fire on the beach or on my block for an event?

A: No, burning on any beach or street is prohibited at all times.

Q: Is there any time during the year that I can't have a fire?

A: The Fire Marshal of Virginia Beach may prohibit any burning based on weather conditions and advisory information from other state agencies. Please contact our office for current details.

Q: I bought a pre-made fire place from a big box store, are there any regulations I need to know?

A: Yes, any pre-manufactured fire place device needs to be at least 15 feet from anything that can readily ignite. You must also have a means to extinguish the fire just like any recreational fire.

Q: I live in an apartment complex, can I have a pre-manufactured fire place on my balcony?

A: No, if any portable fire place, or open flame heating device is found on site during a call for service (emergency or non-emergency) the management company will be notified and the device shall be removed.

Q: Can I use a "burn barrel"?

A: The use of "burn barrels" are prohibited