



Montgomery County
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Environmental Policy and Compliance



Requirements for Recreational Burning in Montgomery County

These requirements are based on Montgomery County Code, Chapter 3 and the Code of Maryland Regulations; 26.11.07.

What is Open Burning?

1. Open burning is defined as a fire where any material is burned on the ground or in an open receptacle. Open burning is prohibited in Montgomery County without a permit and fines of \$500 per day may be imposed for non-permitted open burning.
2. Exceptions to the prohibition on open burning are fires for cooking of food, on other than commercial premises, and open fires for recreational purposes such as campfires or bonfires.

What can you burn in a recreational fire?

1. Only dry, aged wood and brush may be burned in a recreational fire. It is prohibited to burn ordinary household waste, construction debris, lumber, leaves, and materials which produce dense smoke when burned, including, but not limited to tires and roofing materials.

What conditions must be met for recreational fires on the ground?

1. Recreational fires must not be larger than 3 feet in diameter or create a nuisance condition or produce dense smoke (visible emissions that exceed 20% opacity for a total of more than 3 minutes in any 60 minute period). **In order to prevent nuisance conditions, the Department recommends:**
 - fires not be located closer than 300 feet from any neighboring habitable dwelling
 - the ground around the material to be burned be cleared to prevent fires from spreading
 - the fire not be located near tall grass or tree lines
 - fire extinguishing equipment, including sufficient water, be readily available on the site
 - a fire supervisor, 18 years of age or older, be within direct view of the fire at all times
2. You may not burn if winds are forecasted to be greater than 12 mph for your ZIP Code area as reported by the NOAA National Weather Service Forecast at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>, or if there is an air pollution episode (code orange or red air quality days).
3. Prior to ignition of the fire, you must notify the Department of Fire and Rescue Services at their non-emergency number, 240-683-6520, of your intent to burn.

Conditions that must be met for recreational fires in an open receptacle (Fire Pit, Fire Bowl, Chiminea, etc.) are listed on the back page of this document.

What should I do if I do not meet the requirements to have a recreational fire?

1. Compost your leaves and yard trimmings.
2. Haul the materials to the County's Solid Waste Transfer Station or Poolesville "Beauty Spot."
3. Use the County-wide recycling for curbside collection of brush and organic yard debris.
4. Call 311 for information on options to dispose of natural wood waste, brush, leaves and organic yard debris.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Use of Fire Pits, Fire Bowls and Chimineas

The Use of Fire Pits, Fire Bowls, Chimineas and other similar appliances has become popular in our community. Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service would like to share with you the criteria for their use.

- 1) You must have permission of the land owner.
- 2) There must be one person at least 18 years of age to assume responsibility for the use of these appliances.
- 3) A permit from the Fire Marshal or the Department of Environmental Protection is not required.
- 4) Use in accordance to the manufacturer's guidelines. Once you purchase this appliance, keep these guidelines in a safe place for future reference.
- 5) Use of Fire Pits, Fire Bowls, Chimineas and similar portable devices must be at least 15 feet away from any building or structure. Keep a clear area (clear meaning free of anything that can burn) of at least 3 feet in diameter around the appliance. Please remember that mulch can burn so keep your appliance at least 3 feet away from mulch as well.
- 6) Do not use or store Fire Pits, Fire Bowls, Chimineas or similar devices on a balcony or deck.
- 7) Burn only aged dried wood. The burning of any type of construction material or trash is prohibited.
- 8) Do not use any type of flammable or combustible liquid at any time.
- 9) Have a garden hose connected to a constant water source available close by.
- 10) Smoke is not allowed to cross property lines. Be mindful of the wind speed prior to starting this type of fire.
- 11) Do not use on Code Orange or Code Red Air Quality days.
- 12) Dispose of all ashes in a safe manner. After 24 hours has passed, all left over hot ashes must be thoroughly dampened, cooled and stored in a metal can that is used solely for ash storage. Ashes that are 2 or 3 days old may appear to be safe, but can still retain enough heat to cause an unwanted fire. Do not discard hot ashes in a compost pile, paper bag cardboard box or anything that is combustible. Also, be careful in handling partially burned wood. The wood may still be smoldering and cause a serious burn.

Please keep in mind, that if the Fire Department is contacted and determines your situation to be a fire hazard, the Fire Department can require you to extinguish your fire.

If additional questions arise, please email The Fire Code Enforcement Section @ Fire.OutdoorPlaces@montgomerycountymd.gov

Fire Code Enforcement Section

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www.montgomerycountymd.gov/firerescue
Serving with dedication, courage and compassion