



West Metro  
Fire Rescue

# RECREATIONAL FIRES & PORTABLE OUTDOOR FIREPLACES

This document was created to communicate West Metro Fire Rescue's (WMFR) requirements for recreational fires and the use of portable outdoor fireplaces at single-family and shared-wall dwellings, including townhomes. The issuance of a permit by WMFR does not relieve the permittee of liability for damages as a result of utilizing recreational fire or portable outdoor fireplaces.

Please note Other entities (EPA, Health Departments, Municipalities, Homeowners' Associations, Sheriffs' Departments, etc.) may have additional requirements which are not included in this document. The party/person utilizing a recreational fire or portable outdoor fireplaces is responsible for confirming that their activity is not in conflict with ANY requirements or restrictions set forth by the fire district or other entities.

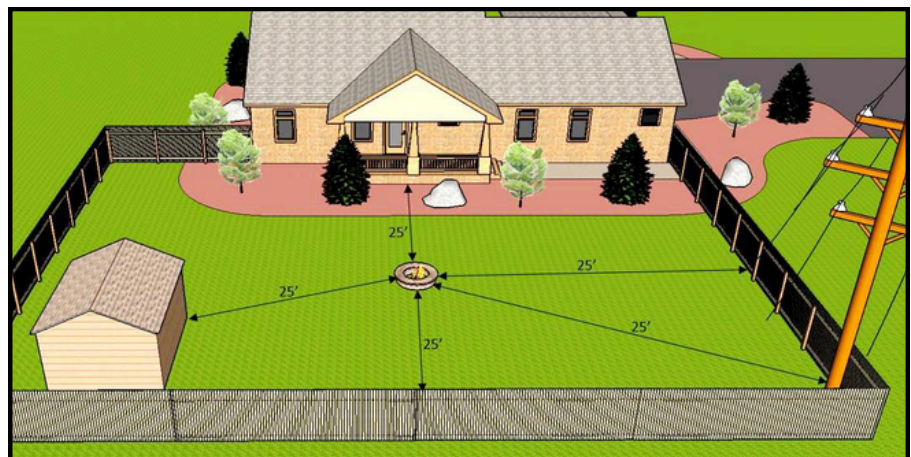
**Recreational Fires:** Recreational fires are for recreation (pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth, or similar purposes), **NOT** burning yard waste, tree branches, dead plant material, trash, rubbish, debris, wood or upholstered furniture, cardboard, discarded clothing, or other similar substances. Fuel should consist of cut and dried wood or untreated lumber. A recreational fire is limited to a pile size of 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height. A recreational fire does not require a permit, but anything larger requires an [open burn permit](#) (bonfire or agricultural burn). A recreational fire pit must be at least 25 feet from a structure or combustible material.

*The 3 images below are examples of Recreational fires*



## **Approved Recreational Fire Locations:**

Recreational fires are required to be a minimum of **25-feet** away from all combustible materials and structures, including houses, decks, fences, sheds, utility poles, etc. Other conditions which could cause a fire to spread to within 25-feet of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition; this could mean mowing, watering grass, trimming trees/shrubs, etc.





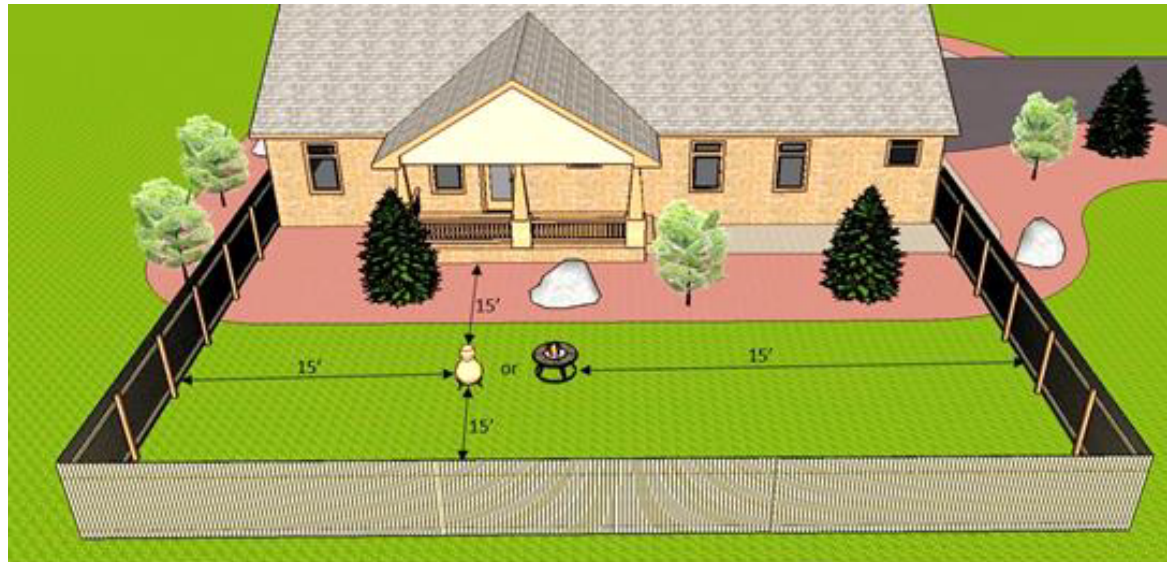
**Portable Outdoor Fireplace:** A portable, outdoor, solid-fuel-burning fireplace that may be constructed of steel, concrete, clay, or other noncombustible material. A portable outdoor fireplace may be open in design or may be equipped with a small hearth opening and a short chimney or chimney opening at the top.

*The 4 images below are examples of Portable Outdoor Fireplaces*



**Approved Portable Fireplace Locations:**

Portable outdoor fireplaces do not have a required minimum clearance from structures and combustible materials but are recommended to be operated at least 15' away from these things. Portable outdoor fireplaces must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions at all times.



**Permissible Fuels:** Firewood and other natural vegetation may be burned in recreational fires and portable outdoor fireplaces. Burning household goods or other trash is prohibited. Products which are specifically manufactured to assist with igniting fires may be used in accordance with the instructions on the packaging, including "fire logs" and charcoal lighter fluid. Use of gasoline and other flammable liquids is prohibited.



# RECREATIONAL FIRES & PORTABLE OUTDOOR FIREPLACES



# BURN RESTRICTIONS & OPEN BURN PERMITS

## SAFETY

Our goal at WMFR is to allow the use of recreational fire and portable outdoor fireplaces while ensuring the safety of you, our communities, and our firefighters.

For that reason, **neither recreational fire nor portable outdoor fireplaces may be utilized during the following times:**

- When there is a **"Red Flag Warning"** issued by the National Weather Service: <https://www.weather.gov/bou/>
- When there is an **open burn restriction issued by the county** sheriff (for unincorporated areas) or elected representatives (for incorporated areas).
  - Jefferson County Fire Ban Status - <https://www.jeffco.us/511/Fire-Restrictions-Bans>
  - Douglas County Fire Ban Status - <https://dcsheriff.net/sheriffs-office/divisions/emergency-management/fire-restrictions/>

WMFR does not issue permits or conduct site inspections for recreational fires or portable outdoor fireplaces but we **do** require compliance with all regulations in this document and the adopted fire codes (note that clearances for portable outdoor fireplaces are recommended, but not required in one- and two-family dwellings). If open burning occurs that does not meet the above guidelines, a permit shall be obtained from the WMFR Life Safety Division by submitting an Operational Permit Request Form for an Open Burn - <https://www.westmetrofire.org/operational-permit-request-form>

## FIRE DEPARTMENT NOTIFICATION

If there is any concern or questions regarding the proper use of portable outdoor fireplaces or recreational fires, contact the WMFR's Life Safety team at 303-989-4307. If it is after hours, you can contact our dispatch's non-emergent line at 303-980-7300.

***If the fire extends beyond the area where you intended, call 911 IMMEDIATELY and report it!***

## ATTENDANCE - Stay by the fire

Recreational fires and portable outdoor fireplaces shall be attended by an adult (18 years old, minimum) who has access to a telephone to notify the fire department if a problem develops. This attendance shall be constant and shall continue until the fire is completely extinguished. Means of extinguishing the fire shall be present at all times and shall include at least one of the following:

- A portable fire extinguisher with a minimum 5 lb. capacity and rated for class A hazards.
- A garden hose with a spray nozzle and the valve opened.
- A 5-gallon bucket of water or sand (with shovel).
- Tractors or other heavy equipment capable of safely smothering the fire.



# SMOKE CIGARETTES? USE AN ASHTRAY

**\*POTTED PLANTS ARE NOT ASHTRAYS\*  
THEY ARE FUEL FOR THE FIRE**

West Metro Fire Rescue routinely responds to significant fires with devastating outcomes all because a cigarette was put out in the dirt of a potted plant. Although many people think that this is a safe practice, not all dirt is the same. Today's potting soils contain very little actual soil but instead they have large volumes of peat moss shredded wood, bark, styrofoam and vermiculite in potting mix. All of these ingredients are highly flammable and ignite easily under dry conditions. Once the soil ignites, fertilizers in the mix will accelerate the flames.

When a cigarette is put out in the dirt of a potted plant, the soil can work to insulated the lit cigarette, heat the soil to an ignition temperature and begin to smolder. These types of fires can often smolder for several hours and when enough oxygen is available, the materials will break out into flames. If the planter is located near other combustible items like a deck, side of the house or fence, they may become involved resulting in a serious fire. If you are a smoker, please remember to keep your "butt" out of the dirt and use a sturdy, metal ashtray to properly extinguish the smoking materials.



## QUICK TIPS

## NEVER PUT CIGARETTES IN POTTED PLANTS

- Water potted plants regularly. Make sure the soil around your potted plants stays moist.
- Keep ashtrays handy and accessible. Make sure smokers have a safe place to dispose of their butts, indoors and outdoors.
- Use clay pots where possible. If a fire breaks out, a clay pot will keep it contained better than other types of pots.
- Always follow the manufacturers' directions for the type of potting soil you are using.
- Do not use potting soil labelled for indoor use only in outdoor containers, as different ingredients can dry out faster outdoors in the sun.
- Keep potting soil away from combustible materials that could ignite and burn easily, such as firewood, stacks of old newspapers, aerosols, paint solvents, gasoline and cleaning products.
- Dispose of unused potting soil carefully. Unused soil can dry out quickly and become a fire hazard. If you have any left over, spread it on your garden beds.



**PLANTS DON'T HAVE BUTTS,  
LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY.**



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