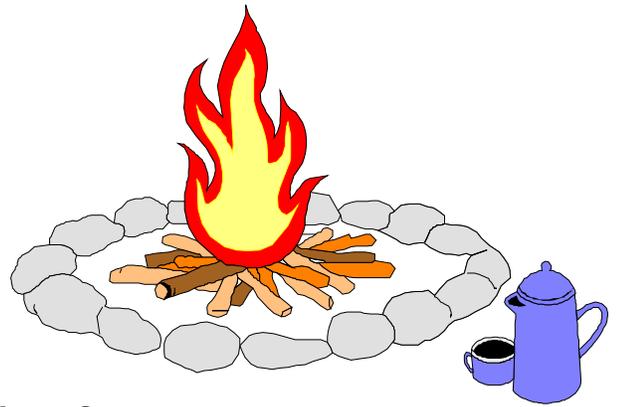


Outdoor Burning

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) receives many inquiries about “Outdoor Burning” of yard waste and recreational fires in fire pits. Below are frequently asked questions regarding the rules for “Residential Fires” (yard waste and maintenance) and “Recreational Fires.”



What laws govern burning and affect my ability to burn?

Rules that govern outdoor burning and establish outdoor burning guidelines are contained within Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-425, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency Regulation I and the International Fire Code as adopted by each local city.

What kind of fires are allowed?

In accordance with Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-425 the only fires allowed within an “Urban Growth Area” are “Recreational Fires.”

What is an “Urban Growth Area”?

By definition within WAC 173-425, an Urban Growth Area means land, generally including and associated with an incorporated city, designated by a county for urban growth under RCW 36.70A.030.

What are “Recreational Fires”?

By definition within WAC 173-425, “Recreational Fires” means cooking fires, campfires using charcoal or firewood that occur in designated areas or on private property for cooking, pleasure, or ceremonial purposes. **Fires used for debris disposal purposes are not considered recreational fires but are considered residential fires.**

What kind of fires are prohibited?

Within the VRFA service area (Algona, Auburn and Pacific), residential burning (yard waste and land maintenance), bon fires and land clearing fires were banned by action of the State of Washington legislature in 1989.

Do I need a permit?

Yes, permits are required within the VRFA service area which includes the cities of Algona, Auburn and Pacific. Recreational fire permits are considered to be an educational permit and no associated fee is charged to the individual obtaining the permit. Permits ARE NOT required in City park areas with designated fire pits. Recreational fire permits issued by the VRFA are not transferable.

Permits will not be issued during burn bans as declared by the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, the King County Fire Marshal or the VRFA Fire Marshal.

Where can I have a “Recreational Fire”?

Recreational fire permits are issued for use within private property. Publicly owned areas with designated fire pits do not require a permit from the Valley Regional Fire Authority.

What can be burned?

Basically, seasoned firewood or bare untreated, processed wood (ideally with a moisture content less than 20 percent by weight) and charcoal briquettes. Recently downed wood, brush, yard debris or treated dimensional lumber is not allowed for the use of recreational fires.

How large can a fire be?

Recreational fires can have a fuel area no larger than three (3) feet in diameter and two (2) feet in height. Open fires on the ground shall be at least 25 feet from all structures and fences.

Smoke from fires

You are responsible for the smoke from your fire. If smoke from any outdoor fire impacts or unreasonably interferes with the use or enjoyment of surrounding or adjacent property, it is considered a nuisance and you must stop burning when notified. Puget Sound Clean Air Agency defines nuisance smoke as follows: “...odor is distinct and definite, any unpleasant characteristics recognizable”. Before burning make sure to check wind direction to help determine that the smoke from your fire will not create a nuisance for surrounding or adjacent property. **Be a good neighbor.** Notify your neighbors that you have obtained a “Recreational Fire” permit and that they should notify you if your smoke is becoming a nuisance.

Quick tips

Before burning call 1-800-595-4341, a 24-hour recorded message line that will provide information regarding air quality and on-going burn bans.

Make sure you are in a safe location. For recreational fires you must be at least 25 feet from any structure and/or fence.

Fires must be attended at all times. Never leave a fire without extinguishing the fire.

Watch your smoke. If your smoke causes a nuisance to other property owners, you must not burn.

Questions or additional information

Additional information about outdoor burning can be found at: www.pscleanair.org, or call the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency at 1-800-552-3565.

The Valley Regional Fire Authority Fire Marshal’s Office can be reached at: 253-288-5870. Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
To report illegal or nuisance burning call 911.

