

SAFETY TIPS

for a Backyard Fire (Fire Pit)

Sitting around a fire is an American summer past time we hold dear to our hearts. However, not all of us can escape to the woods for the true campfire experience. Backyard fire pits are becoming a popular alternative to camp fires.

Having a campfire or fire pit at home? Follow these safety tips!

Insurance Tip: Check with your insurance company if you need to add extra coverage to your homeowners' policy to cover your fire pit.

Preparing Your Fire Pit and Surrounding Area

- If not set right or basic safety procedures aren't taken, a fun outdoor fire can go from terrific to terrible. Below are some tips for having the safest backyard fire possible.
- Only build a fire in enclosed, contained areas such as an outdoor chiminea, fire bowl or fire pit.
- Clear the area around the pit of dry paper, grass, leaves, or pine needles to avoid random sparks from igniting them.
- Move furniture away from the fire pit to avoid burns from the sparks.
- Consider adding a fire pit screens to contain sparks — a great option especially if children will be around the fire.
- Before starting the fire, make sure that the lid will still close to extinguish the fire in case of emergency. Don't overload it with fuel.
- Make sure the pit is on a flat surface in an open area — NOT underneath trees or roofs or in a building to avoid anything accidentally catching on fire.
- Check out the wind direction before lighting the fire. The direction of the wind can affect the strength of the fire — another reason to have a fire pit in an open area.
- Keep flammable liquids far far away from the fire pit. The heat alone can cause the liquids to catch fire.

During the Fire

- NEVER leave a fire unattended. Even the smallest fire can grow into a large one without supervision.

- Keep your distance! Fire pits have a knack of spitting out sparks without warning.
- NEVER use garden waste or garbage in a fire. These items produce harmful black smoke into the air. Make sure to use seasoned wood or charcoal.
- Keep a first-aid kit nearby to treat minor burns.
- ALWAYS keep a fire extinguisher or hose nearby to quickly put out a fire in case of an emergency.
- Never leave children unsupervised. They tend to not realize the danger of fire and often get too close to one.
- For obvious reasons, be careful with the amount of alcohol consumed around a fire. Alcohol is also very flammable when around heat.

Putting Out the Fire

- Make sure the fire is completely put out before leaving it unattended. Never leave a fire to die out on its own.
- Discard the fuel by following these steps:
 - 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.

Have a Fire Extinguisher Handy.

We'd like to thank WhatHappensNow.com and the Montgomery County (MD) Fire and Rescue Service for these helpful guidelines.