

How to Have a Safe and Legal Recreational Fire

It's the middle of the week and you have a craving for marshmallows roasted over an open fire that you need to fill right now and can't wait for your next camping trip. The solution – build a little fire in your backyard and roast away. However, you also have that little voice wondering if open fires are even legal in the city and if they are, is a permit required.

Rest easy, because in the City of Snohomish residential recreational fires are not only allowed but no permit is necessary. However, that does not mean you can just build a huge bon fire anytime anywhere on your property.

The International Fire Code (IFC) establishes rules for residential recreational fires and requirements for fire pits. The City has adopted the IFC under Snohomish Municipal Code 19.04. The state also has relevant regulations in Chapter 173-425, Washington Administrative Code and in the Clean Air Act which is codified in Chapter 70.94, Revised Code of Washington.

Open fires may only be lit in a noncombustible fire pit. Beware, not all metal containers are approved for use as fire pits. Fire pits must be located at least 25 feet from any combustibles which means your house (or your neighbor's), including porches, decks, and roof eaves. Fire pits should be placed on a level area without any dry grass or vegetation around them. A fire-retardant base is always a good idea.

Recreational fires cannot be more than 3 feet wide and 2 feet high. Only use charcoal, dry seasoned firewood, or manufactured logs. Anything else is considered to be yard waste, debris or trash all of which are illegal to burn.

Be sure to be considerate of your neighbors. It is always illegal to smoke out your neighbor. If the smoke from your fire bothers your neighbors, damages their property, or otherwise causes a nuisance, it must be put out immediately.

Before lighting the match, be sure to check to see if a burn ban is in place. The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency is responsible for issuing burn bans. To see if there is a burn ban in effect in Snohomish or to just learn more about burn bans visit their website at <https://www.pscleanair.org/167/Burn-Bans>.

Never leave a recreational fire unattended and be prepared to douse errant embers by having a water hose, shovel, and/or dirt available to do so. Do not hesitate to call 911 if the fire escapes your fire pit and seems out of control.

For more information contact the City of Snohomish Fire Marshal at 360-282-3158 or Snohomish Fire District No. 4 at 360-558-2141.