



**CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**LIFE SAFETY SERVICES**  
**GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS**

**GUIDELINE A.11 – Recreational Fires and Barbeques**

**A.11.1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guideline is to provide fire code regulations to assist the public in understanding the requirements for recreational fires and barbeques.

**A.11.2 SCOPE**

This guideline shall apply to all recreational wood burning fires including fire pits, bonfires, open burning, portable outdoor fireplaces, and wood or gas burning barbeques in the City of Newport Beach.

**A.11.3 DEFINITIONS**

**AQMD.** South Coast Air Quality Management District  
(Contact number: (800)288-7664.

**BONFIRE.** An outdoor fire utilized for ceremonial purposes.

**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 in the top.

**OPEN BURNING.** The burning of materials wherein products of combustion are emitted directly into ambient air without passing through a stack, or chimney from an enclosed chamber. Open burning does not include road flares, smudge pots and similar devices associated with safety or occupational uses typically considered open flames or recreational fires. For the purpose of this definition, a chamber shall be regarded as enclosed when, during the time combustion occurs, only apertures, ducts, stacks, flues or chimneys necessary to provide combustion air and permit the escape of exhaust gas are open.

**RECREATIONAL FIRE.** An outdoor fire, burning materials other than rubbish where the fuel being burned is not contained in an incinerator, outdoor fireplace, barbeque grill or barbeque pit and has a total fuel area of 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height for pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth or similar purposes.

**SPECIAL FIRE PROTECTION AREA.** Any geographical area, designated by the Fire Chief, in which structures directly about wildland space or a fuel modification zone on one or more sides. Special Fire Protection Areas include, but are not limited to, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

**VERY HIGH FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE.** A geographical area designated in accordance with the California Government Code, Section 51178, which contains the type and condition of vegetation, topography, weather and structure density which potentially increases the possibility of wildland conflagration fires.

#### **A.11.4 PERMITS REQUIRED**

For bonfires and open burning, a permit shall first be obtained from the City of Newport Beach Fire Department prior to the building or kindling of any bonfire or the commencement of any open burning. Burning of wood or combustible materials is also regulated by the AQMD and is prohibited during smog or smoke alert days. Check with the AQMD before burning.

#### **A.11.5 PROCEDURE**

**Special Fire Protection Areas.** Outdoor fires shall not be built, ignited, or maintained in or upon Special Fire Protection Areas, except by permit from the fire code official.

**Exception:** Outdoor fires within habited premises or designated campsites where such fires are in a permanent barbecue, portable barbecue, outdoor fireplace, fire pit, incinerator or grill and are a minimum of 30 feet (9144 mm) from a grass-, grain-, brush-, or forest-covered area.

Permits shall incorporate such terms and conditions which will reasonably safeguard public safety and property. Outdoor fires shall not be built, ignited or maintained in or upon hazardous fire areas under the following conditions:

- A. When high winds are blowing;
- B. When a person age 18 or over is not present at all time to watch and tend such fire, or
- C. When public announcement is made that open burning is prohibited.

**Prohibited open burning and/or recreational fires.** Open burning and/or recreational fires that are offensive or objectionable because of smoke or odor

emissions or when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous shall be prohibited.

**Beaches and Parks.** No person shall make, set, or maintain a fire at any beach, park or other public place within the City except in areas where proper containers are provided for such fires by the City and where City signs are plainly posted indicating such fires are permissible.

**Attendance.** Open burning; bonfires, recreational fires, and portable outdoor fireplaces shall be constantly attended until the fire is extinguished. A minimum of one portable fire extinguisher with a minimum 4-A rating or other approved on-site fire extinguishing equipment, such as dirt, sand, water barrel, garden hose or water truck, shall be available for immediate utilization.

#### **Portable Outdoor Fireplaces:**

- Portable outdoor fireplaces shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall not be operated within 15 feet of a structure or combustible material.

**Exception:** Portable outdoor fireplaces used at one- and two-family dwellings.

#### **Recreational Fires/Fire Pits:**

- Fire pits may not be placed or used on any public beach, park or public way. **Exception:** Designated fire pits provided by the City of Newport Beach.
- The fuel load capacity of the containment area shall not exceed 3 feet (914 mm) or more in diameter or more than 2 feet (610 mm) in height.
- Recreational fires and fire pits shall not be located within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure or combustible construction material. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 25 feet (7620 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.
- Only natural firewood or commercial logs may be burned. Burning of tree trimmings, leaves, yard waste, paper, cardboard, garbage and similar rubbish is not permitted.
- Adult supervision required.
- Constant attendance required.
- Have a charged garden hose or fire extinguisher available to extinguish the fire.
- Make sure fire is completely out before retiring for the evening.

- Check with the AQMD for any requirements before burning wood.

### **Outdoor Barbeques BBQ's:**

- Barbeques may not be placed or used on any public beach, park or public way.

**Exception:** Designated barbeques provided by the City of Newport Beach.

- Charcoal, wood and liquid- petroleum- gas -fueled cooking devices with an LP gas container capacity greater than 2.5 pounds are prohibited on most balconies or partially enclosed patio areas of multi-family dwellings. If you live in an apartment or condominium complex, check with your property management, homeowners association and/or the Fire Department before purchasing or operating a barbecue in these areas.
- BBQ's should be placed a minimum of 10 feet away from any structure and combustible materials including fences, awnings, overhangs, trees, bushes or dry grass. Check with the BBQ's manufacturer's instructions for required clearances.

**Exception:** One- and two-family dwellings.

- BBQ's should be placed on a level surface.
- Do not wear loose clothing while cooking and be sure to secure long hair.
- Keep children and pets away from BBQ's.
- Never leave a BBQ unattended.

### **Bonfires:**

- Permit required from the Fire Department.
- Approval from the AQMD.
- Burning of rubbish is not allowed.
- Shall not be conducted within 50 feet (15240 mm) of a structure or combustible material. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 50 feet (15240 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.
- Constant attendance with approved fire extinguishing method onsite.

### **Open Burning:**

- Permit required from the Fire Department.
- Approval and permit required from AQMD.
- Shall not be conducted within 50 feet (15240 mm) of a structure or combustible material. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 50 feet (15240 mm) of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

**Exceptions:**

1. Fires in approved containers that are not less than 15 feet (4572 mm) from a structure.
  2. The minimum required distance from a structure shall be 25 feet (7620 mm) where the pile size is 3 feet (914 mm) or less in diameter and 2 feet (610 mm) or less in height.
- Constant attendance with approved fire extinguishing method onsite.