

OUTDOOR FIRE PITS AND FIRE SAFETY

The following rules for using a firepit and governing all other outdoor fires are hereby established by the SMSA Board of Directors in consideration of the safety and protection of our members, their property, and our community, which backs up to the George Washington National Forest and is heavily wooded in most all locations. These rules are based upon and in conformance with Section 10.1-1142 of the Virginia Code; therefore, guests, visitors and renters from other areas, who may not be familiar with living in wooded areas, must be familiarized with these rules.

The use of permanent inground outdoor firepits and portable outdoor fireplaces, chimineas, above-ground outdoor fire pits, including permanent and portable devices and structures that burn firewood, propane, or ethanol, referred to below as “fire pits”, must meet the following requirements:

1. The fire pit materials must be in good condition and non-flammable (such as steel, concrete, or clay).
2. The base for a fire pit must be at least two (2) times larger than the fire pit and must be constructed of non-flammable material such as sand, gravel, flat river rock, brick, concrete, or a fire protection mat.
3. A fire pit cannot exceed three (3) feet in diameter or two (2) feet in height.
4. Permanent inground fire pits must be located at least twenty-five (25) feet from any structure or combustible material.
5. Portable fire pits must be located at least fifteen (15) feet from any structure or combustible material.
6. Fire pits must be located at least ten (10) feet from property lines.
7. Smoke from a fire pit may not unreasonably impact neighboring property owners.
8. A fire pit cannot be placed on or under a wooden deck.
9. Fire pits shall not be located under trees or low hanging branches.
10. Wood burning fire pits must have properly fitting screens with no more than ¼” mesh.
11. Portable fire pits must be operated in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.
12. When in use, the outdoor fire pit must be constantly attended to by a responsible person (at least eighteen (18) years of age), who remains outside and within eyesight of the pit at all times until the fire is fully extinguished.
13. The person attending the fire must have ready access to suitable fire suppression tools such as a fire extinguisher, rake, water, sand, and shovel available at all times until the fire is fully extinguished.
14. Children must be supervised, and pets kept away from a fire pit.
15. Fire pits should not be used during windy conditions.
16. Before lighting the fire, all flammable materials such as leaves, twigs, grass, pine needles, and other combustible material must be cleared within 25 feet from fire.
17. Outdoor fire pit fires must be fully extinguished after use.
18. Ashes removed from a wood burning fire pit must be fully extinguished and deposited in a suitable container. Ashes may be disposed at the Shenandoah County Landfill or Citizen Convenience Sits.
19. Burning of yard waste, household trash, refuse, household debris, hazardous waste, treated wood, junk, rubber, plastics, tires, hazardous materials, oil or petroleum-based products, products of salvage operations, chemicals or animal carcasses is prohibited.
20. Property owners must provide guests/renters with detailed instructions on the operation of the fire pit or prohibit its use. This should include the physical address of the property in the event of an emergency.
21. Owners and renters must be made aware of Virginia’s No Burn Rule (Section B of the cited statute above) which, from February 15 to April 30 prohibits open air burning within 300 feet of any woodland, bushland or field containing dry grass or other inflammable material, except between the hours of 4 P.M. and 12:00 midnight”. For detailed information, see <https://dof.virginia.gov/wildland-prescribed-fire/fire-laws/4-pm-burning-law/>

Approved by the Sundance Mt. South Association Board of Directors on August 28, 2022

Key Numbers:

- New Market Fire Department: (540) 740-8904
- VA Department of Forestry: (434) 977-6555