



Burlington Fire Department

Office of the City Fire Marshal



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This memorandum is intended to answer questions regarding open burning and outside fires in the City of Burlington. As a reminder, [Burlington Code of Ordinances Chapter 13-3](#) prohibits fires as a means of fire prevention in our community since 1977. The primary hazard here is ignition of structures or vegetation by direct fire spread or flying brands and embers. This section of the ordinances cross-references [BCO Chapter 21-17](#), which falls under the City Health Officer and prohibits nuisance smoke generation. Fires are prohibited in City Parks properties by [BCO Chapter 22-10](#) (except in the established campsite fire areas at the North Beach Campground, which are approved locations).

Here is a quick-reference guide to the “Frequently Asked Questions” related to outside fires:

Not approved under City Ordinances: (Permit requests will not be entertained by the Fire Marshal’s Office):

- Outside open fires with solid fuels (wood)
- Outside solid fuel (wood) fires in burn pans or “chimineas”
- Burning of yard waste, construction debris or trash

Approved for use, no permits required:

- Cooking with charcoal in a hibachi or grill designed for the use
- Cooking with a charcoal, pellet, or propane smoker using wood chips or chunks for flavoring
- Cooking with a natural gas or propane grill designed for the use
- Commercially available propane “fire effects” or “fire tables” that are designed for the use (i.e. no “home-made” equipment)

Permit required from the Fire Marshal’s Office:

- Outside open fires with solid fuels (wood) in specific low-hazard locations, supervised by qualified staff and under conditions specified in the permit up to and including a fire watch detail provided by the Burlington Fire Department (limited cases, typically requested by the City Department of Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront at pre-approved locations)

Permanent equipment may be approved for construction and use with permits, inspections, and approvals from the Department of Permitting and Inspections at 645 Pine St:

- Permanent propane or natural gas fire pits, fire tables, or fire effects
- Constructed outdoor cooking ovens (including wood-fueled enclosed pizza ovens)

Safety tips and fire code requirements:

- Cooking appliances and fire effects/fire tables need to be designed for the intended purpose and carry either an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listing or an approval of an industry testing agency; look for these approvals when shopping for appliances
- Do not store or use a propane, natural gas, or charcoal grill or fire table/fire effect on wood decks or within 10 feet of a building
- Dispose of ashes in a metal container with a lid stored away from structures
- Secure propane cylinders against tip-over and valve damage (such as in a milk crate)
- Provide distance between the propane cylinder and the fire effect if the tank is not built into the appliance; ensure that the propane hose does not present a tripping hazard
- Read, understand, and follow the manufacturer’s instructions and safety messages for the equipment you are using
- Clear dry vegetation and ignitable fuels around the grill or appliance at least three feet in all directions
- Have a water source such as a garden hose or an A-B-C dry chemical portable fire extinguisher nearby and ready for use if needed
- Call 9-1-1 immediately to summon the Burlington Fire Department should the fire produced by the appliance or grill get out of control