

# Guidelines for Burning within the City of Helena



## Initial Considerations

### Air Quality

In the city we live in close proximity to one another and the burning of fires may cause problems for our neighbors. Out of respect for our neighbors we need to consider that smoke can travel into open windows and cause smells and poor air quality that can significantly impact those with respiratory ailments.

### Safety

Any fire requires constant supervision by an adult with sound judgment. The Helena Fire Department encourages the supervising adult(s) to refrain from using alcoholic beverages, restrict children from playing around the fire, and immediately extinguish the fire if wind and other weather conditions arise that could spread the fire or embers. All fires shall be constantly attended until the fire is completely extinguished. A minimum of one portable fire extinguisher ( 5 pound or larger) shall be provided 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. Fires needing a permit may dictate additional requirements based on the individual circumstances upon evaluation by the Helena Fire Department. If any fire grows outside the confined or intended area, the person starting the fire, homeowner, or permit holder, can be held liable by State Law to cover suppression costs and damages.

Below are the various types of fires cited in the 2009 edition of the International Fire Code. Please review each fire type to ensure you are following the correct guidelines. If a permit is required, contact the Fire Department at 447-8472 to schedule a site visit and additional information.

### **Open Burning** (Permit Required)

This is the burning of materials wherein products of combustion are emitted directly into the ambient air without passing through a stack or chimney from an enclosed chamber. Examples include the burning of wood or vegetation on the ground. Open burning shall not be conducted less than 50 feet from any structure and provisions shall be made to prevent the fire from spreading to within 50 feet of any structure. Exceptions are as follows:

1. Fires in approved containers that are not less than 15 feet from a structure.
2. The minimum required distance from a structure shall be 25 feet where the pile size is 3 feet or less in diameter and 2 feet or less in height.

### **Bonfires** (Permit Required)

This is an outdoor fire utilized for ceremonial purposes. Bonfires shall not be conducted within 50 feet of a structure or combustible material unless the fire is contained in a

barbecue pit. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 50 feet of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

**Recreational Fires** (No Permit needed)

This is the outdoor burning of materials other than rubbish where the fuel being burned is not contained in an incinerator, outdoor fireplace, portable outdoor fireplace, barbecue grill or barbecue pit and has a total fuel area of 3 feet or less in diameter and 2 feet or less in height for pleasure, religious, ceremonial, cooking, warmth or similar purposes.

Recreational fires shall not be conducted within 25 feet of a structure or combustible material. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread within 25 feet of a structure shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

**Portable Outdoor Fireplaces** (No Permit needed)

This is a 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. 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. The exceptions to this are outdoor fireplaces at one and two family dwellings.