

Open Burning Guidelines

In response to an increased number of incidents, inquiries, and confusion regarding open burning, the following is an overview of City of Rockford open burning codes, ordinances, and guidelines.

Burning of trash, rubbish, yard waste, or construction materials is not allowed within the city limits. Burning of any of the above materials is in violation of city ordinance.

PRAIRIE BURNS

Permits are issued for prairie land burns. These permits are only issued with written approval from the Environmental Protection Agency and City of Rockford Legal and Fire Departments. There are specific instructions that apply to conducting the burn; i.e., extinguishment, safety, notification of burns, and times burn is permitted.

RECREATIONAL FIRES

The definition of a recreational fire by the City-adopted *ICC International Fire Code, 2003 Edition*, Section 302.1 is:

An outdoor fire, burning materials other than rubbish, with a total fire area of 3 feet or less in diameter and 2 feet or less in height for cooking food for human consumption.

There is no reference to campfires; therefore, campfires are not allowed inside the city limits of Rockford.

The Division of Fire Prevention provides the following information to citizens calling for information on recreational fires:

1. The definition of a recreational fire.
2. Limit the size of the recreational fire to no larger than 2' x 2' x 2' using seasoned, dry firewood only (about 4 logs).
3. Burn at a reasonable hour (no later than 10:30 – 11:00 PM) and for a reasonable length of time (3 hours).
4. Check with all neighbors (courtesy and health or environmental issues).
5. Have a hose or fire extinguisher present to extinguish the fire.
6. Consider weather conditions (wind, dry conditions, etc.)
7. If a complaint is received and any of the above conditions are violated, the fire will be extinguished and the report forwarded to Fire Prevention for legal action. Remember that a recreational fire is for cooking food, not a campfire.

If the Fire Department is dispatched on an open burning complaint and the Company Officer has any concerns as to the legality of the fire or safety concerns, the fire will be extinguished and a report forwarded to the Division of Fire Prevention.

BONFIRES

The definition of a bonfire by the City-adopted *ICC International Fire Code, 2003 Edition, Section 302.1* is:

An outdoor fire utilized for ceremonial purposes. A bonfire shall not be more than 5' x 5' in dimension and shall not burn longer than 3 hours.

Section 307.3.1 Bonfires. A bonfire shall not be conducted within 50 feet of a structure of combustible material. Conditions, which would cause a fire to spread within 50 feet of a structure, shall be eliminated prior to ignition.

Section 307.3.1.1 Material. Fuel for a bonfire shall consist only of seasoned dry firewood and other material approved by the code official. The bonfire shall be ignited with a small quantity of paper. The fire shall not be utilized for waste disposal purposes and the fuel shall be chosen to minimize the generation of contaminants.

In addition:

1. Bonfires must have a permit issued by the Division of Fire Prevention.
2. The fire must be monitored at all times (person in attendance) with extinguishment plans in place.
3. Consider weather conditions (wind, dry conditions, etc.)

If the Fire Department is dispatched to a bonfire, the Company Officer will ask to see the permit, if no permit, the Company Officer will contact Fire Prevention or Dispatch Center to confirm if there is a permit. If it is confirmed the fire is not permitted, or any of the above conditions are violated, the fire will be extinguished and a report sent to the Division of Fire Prevention for follow-up and/or legal action.

OUTDOOR FIREPLACES

There have been many questions fielded in reference to the numerous types of outdoor fireplaces, fire rings and burning dishes. The most frequently asked question is: "Are these illegal?" and/or "Why do you allow them to be sold in Rockford?"

These items are not illegal; however, the recreational fire conditions apply, meaning they may be used for cooking purposes only. These items are sold in Rockford because they are not illegal and the market area is much larger than Rockford proper and other communities may not have the same restrictions or conditions.

Therefore, the use of these types of items for recreational fires, outside of cooking, is not allowed and will be extinguished. The owner will be asked to voluntarily extinguish the fire. If the owner refuses to willingly comply, the Fire Department will extinguish the fire. If the owner becomes unruly, a police officer response will be requested, and if necessary, a fire investigator, and the matter referred to the Division of Fire Prevention and Legal Department for follow-up.