

Backyard Fire Pits require Permits from Fire Marshal's Office

March 21, 2016

To all Old Saybrook beach communities,

Since spring is finally here, and summer is approaching, I wanted to send a letter to all of the beach communities in Old Saybrook explaining the rules for fire pits.

ALL backyard fire pits require a permit from the Office of the Fire Marshal.

These fire pits which can be purchased from local retailers, include fire pits made of metal or stone, and they can be purchased pre-built.

The following are general guidelines for your fire pit:

1. Backyard fire pits should be located at least fifty (50) feet from any structure (house, garage, shed, etc.), twenty (25) feet from wooded areas and shrubs in your yard and have a vertical clearance of at least 30 feet from low lying branches from nearby trees.
2. Your fire pit should have a reliable source of water available at all times such as a garden hose.
3. The fire pit should be constructed of non-combustible material such as firebrick or block masonry or rocks.
4. Use only dry, properly cured and untreated firewood; **no leaves.**
5. Fire pits should not be used when air pollution levels are high.
6. No burning of garbage, cardboard, construction or building materials, i.e. wood scraps, plywood, etc.
7. If such fire pit creates a public nuisance or health hazard to surrounding property owners, such permit shall be revoked.
8. This Office may revoke such permit/permission at anytime for just cause.

State Statute 22a 174(f) does not allow residential campfires to create a public nuisance. If a backyard campfire is bothering a neighbor, the neighbor has the right to contact local authorities to request the campfire to be extinguished. The local authority should come out and verify the situation and ask the originator of the campfire to put out the fire due to public nuisance. The affected neighbor can also call the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Air Complaint Hotline to file a complaint (860-424-3436). Note that the DEEP's legal interpretation of backyard campfires causing a nuisance falls under the enforcement protocol of open burning and is not an "infraction" but a "crime" (misdemeanor), subject to fine and imprisonment.

Fire Pit Permits are free, and they are valid from April 1st until December 1st.

Attached is information from the CT DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) about campfires, bonfires, fire pits, chimneas and other similar devices.

Please contact the Office of the Fire Marshal at 860-395-3133 if you would like to get a fire pit permit or if you have any questions.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Donn V. Dobson
Fire Marshal

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

Campfires, Bonfires, Fire Pits, Chimineas and Other Similar Devices

The burning of wood in a campfire, bonfire, chiminea or other similar devices is prohibited if the burning is conducted so that it creates a nuisance for neighbors or it is in violation of any restrictions imposed on such burning by your local municipality.

Campfires and/or bonfires are not defined by state statute or regulation; however, some towns have special requirements to conduct this type of burning and may require the homeowner to obtain a permit prior to having a campfire on his or her property. Special requirements may include: limiting the size of such fires; setback distances from structures and/or property lines; lot size; and requiring campfires and/or bonfires to be permitted. Please check with your local Open Burning Official, Fire Marshal or town hall for any restrictions or requirements.



Incomplete combustion that typically occurs when wood is burned in a campfire, bonfire, fire pit, chiminea or similar device can create large amounts of smoke and un-burnt particulate matter; this pollutes the air and can make it difficult for people with respiratory problems to breathe, particularly in densely populated areas. Excessive smoke emitted into the atmosphere at ground level can be a nuisance to your neighbors.

A nuisance is considered to be the unreasonable, unwarranted, or unlawful use of one's property in a manner that substantially interferes with the use or enjoyment of another

individual's real property, without an actual trespass or physical invasion to the land.

Requirements

1. Check with your town, which may have special requirements to conduct this type of burning and may require the homeowner to obtain a permit prior to having a campfire/bonfire on his or her property.
2. Burn only clean, non-processed wood. No wood pallets, construction debris, painted wood, stained/treated wood, or garbage can be burned in a campfire/bonfire, fire pit, chiminea or other similar device. Non-processed wood is considered to be any untreated, natural wood up to and including rough cut lumber. Processed wood is considered to be any wood that has been milled and/or planed and includes recycled wood, glued wood, treated wood, pallets,

Camp/Bonfire, Fire Pit, & Chiminea Complaints

Smoke, nuisance odors, or other complaints regarding campfires, chimineas, fire pits, or other similar devices are best directed to your Open Burning Official and/or local Fire Marshal. Please visit your [town's website](#) to obtain the appropriate contact information.

Issues or concerns relating to the health effects created or experienced from burning in these types of devices should be directed to your local Open Burning Official as well as your [local Health Department](#).

In the case of an emergency please call **911** or your local Fire Department.

crates, and/or wood scraps from these types of materials.

Safety Concerns: When burning wood in a campfire/bonfire or in one of the above-mentioned devices, the utmost caution must be exercised to prevent injury to yourself or others and to prevent damage to your home or property.

[Open Burning](#)

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