

Seattle Permits

—part of a multi-departmental series on City services & permitting

Outdoor Fire Regulations and Prohibitions

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Outdoor fires are generally prohibited in the City of Seattle.

There are certain limited circumstances under which outdoor recreational fires may be allowed, provided that strict fire safety requirements are met, and that air quality conditions allow outdoor burning.

Definitions

Recreational fire means outdoor fire using charcoal or firewood that occurs in designated areas or on private property for cooking, pleasure, ceremonial or similar purposes. Fires used for debris disposal purposes are not considered recreational fires.

When is a Permit Required?

Fire Department permits are not required for use of portable outdoor fireplaces, recreational fires and cooking fires unless they exceed three feet in diameter and two feet in height. Fires larger than three feet by two feet require a permit from both the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and the Seattle Fire Department.

Air Quality Regulations

When air quality conditions are poor, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency may enact a ban on both indoor and outdoor burning. To determine if an air quality burn ban is in effect, call 1-800-595-4341, or visit their web site at www.pscleanair.org.

Requirements for Recreational Fires (Seattle Fire Code)

Recreational fires are those for cooking, pleasure, religious, ceremonial or similar purposes where the fire is not contained in an outdoor fireplace, grill or barbecue pit.

Recreational fires are allowed only if all of the following conditions are met:

1. No air quality burn ban is in effect.
2. The fire is not more than three feet in diameter and two feet in height.
3. The fire is located at least 25 feet from any structure or combustible material. Conditions which could cause a fire to spread shall be eliminated prior to ignition.
4. Trash, yard waste, rubbish, or paper products are not being burned.
5. Fire extinguishing equipment is readily available for use. This should include a shovel and two buckets of water, or a charged garden hose or fire extinguisher with a 4-A rating.
6. The fire is continually attended by an adult until it is completely extinguished.
7. The fire is not being conducted on public property where fires are prohibited, such as in a park or on school grounds. Fires in parks are only allowed where specifically authorized, and where appropriate burning receptacles are provided.
8. If the fire is in conjunction with a sweat lodge, the lodge itself must be less than 200 square feet if constructed of a tent.

The Fire Department may require you to extinguish outdoor fires if these conditions are not met or anytime the outdoor fire is judged to create unsafe conditions.

Prohibited Materials

The following materials may not be burned in any outdoor fire—garbage, dead animals, asphalt, petroleum products, paints, rubber products, plastics, paper (other than what is necessary to start a fire), cardboard, treated wood, construction/demolition debris, metal, or



any substance (other than natural vegetation) that normally releases toxic emissions, dense smoke, or obnoxious odors when burned.

Use of Portable Outdoor Fireplaces

A patio fireplace is one that is designed to function as a masonry or factory-built fireplace, except that they are portable, outdoor, solid-fuel burning fireplaces. They may be constructed of steel, concrete or clay and may or may not be equipped with a short chimney.

Use of patio fireplaces is allowed if the following conditions are met:

1. No air quality burn ban is in effect.
2. The patio fireplace is not placed on a deck or balcony and is not located within 15 feet of a structure or combustible material or vegetation. Use of patio fireplaces at single family homes and duplexes are exempt from this requirement.
3. Trash, yard waste, rubbish, or paper products are not being burned.
4. Fire extinguishing equipment is readily available for use. This should include a shovel and two buckets of water, or a charged garden hose or fire extinguisher with a 4-A rating is present.
5. The fire is not being conducted on public property where fires are prohibited, such as in a park or on school grounds. Fires in parks are only allowed where specifically authorized, and where appropriate burning receptacles are provided.
6. Shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Barbecue/Outdoor Grills

The Seattle Fire Code does not prohibit the use of outdoor grills on balconies, decks, and patios. However, your building management or HOA may have additional rules about BBQs you should know and follow. Due to the open flame and toxic gases they produce, BBQ grills are not allowed to be stored or operated indoors.

It is recommended that propane, charcoal, or other fuel-powered grills not be used on or within 10 feet of surfaces that can catch fire, such as patio furniture, wooden railings, or siding on a building. For more information, see SFD's [outdoor grilling safety handout](#).

Hazardous Fires

Seattle Fire Code Section 307.3 authorizes the Fire Department to require that a recreational fire or fire in a patio fireplace immediately be extinguished if it constitutes a hazard.