

Open Fire Pits

There is no type of special permit required in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the use of outdoor fire pits on private property however; there are some simple rules to follow such as:

1. Keep the fire small and manageable (less than 3' in diameter).
2. Never use wet, damp, or "new" wood. This creates needless, irritating smoke. Always use dry, seasoned wood, charcoal, or specialist fuel (e.g. wood burning briquettes).
3. Do not cause a nuisance to neighbors.
4. If the North Reading Fire Department receives complaints from neighbors that the smoke or smell is bothersome to them, we will investigate, and if deemed necessary, you may be instructed to extinguish.
5. The fire pit should be sited on a flat surface that is non-combustible. An area a minimum of 15' should be cleared around the fire pit in all directions and clear of all vegetation and combustibles.
6. If using a manufactured fire pit, it is to be placed on a flat and level surface. The fire pit should not wobble at all.
7. If assembly is required, be sure to read the assembly instructions carefully and attach any fastenings securely.
8. Do not leave the fire unattended. It could pose a hazard to both children and pets.
Note - it is possible to buy a safety guard.
9. Make sure that the fire pit is placed away from other materials that could burn or catch fire, both overhead and to the side, such as building components, tree branches, sheds, awnings, clothes lines, fences and plants.
10. Use long barbecue tongs to handle wood or cooking items to lessen the risk of burning yourself. A pair of fire gloves would also be useful. The surfaces of cast iron fire pits in particular get very hot.
11. Never use a manufactured fire pit indoors or in an enclosed area.
12. It is advisable to keep a fire extinguisher or garden hose handy, for quick extinguishment if necessary.
13. Never use an accelerant to light any fire. There have been cases of people burning themselves while trying to light a fire with a "small amount" of gasoline. The fire will "flash back" on the person, and can cause severe burns, and possibly death.

If you have any further questions related to the use of open fire pits, contact the North Reading Fire Department's Fire Prevention Office at 978-664-6054.