

Fire Safety

For All Seasons



Campbell County Department of Public Safety
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Fire Safety for All Seasons

Cooking over a campfire, burning leaves in autumn, warming by a fireplace, or lighting fireworks on a summer's night are common practices families undertake throughout the year. However, any time open flames or heating sources are ignited, general precautions should be taken to ensure fire safety and minimize risk to citizens and property.

Fire Seasons in Virginia

The following dates have been designated in the state of Virginia to promote fire safety and minimize risk of injury and property loss:

October 15

This begins the Virginia Department of Forestry's fall wild land fire season.



February 15

This date initiates the statewide burning ban (4:00 p.m. Burning Law) and indicates the start of the spring fire season in Virginia. This law prohibits burning before 4:00 p.m. each day through April 30, if the fire is in, or within 300 feet of, woodland, brush land, or fields containing dry grasses or other flammable materials.



Fall Fire Safety:

In autumn, dry conditions combined with colder temperatures can often create an environment in which fires, outdoors and indoors, can quickly ignite and spread if proper measures are not taken. Using caution and keeping aware of basic safety principles can serve to reduce fire hazards in the home and in the community.

Autumn Campfires:

- Prior to starting a campfire, check with local safety officials regarding open air burning restrictions or bans.
- Only build campfires in fire pits, fire rings, or grilling units surrounded by rocks; do not start campfires directly on exposed ground. Use kindling to start the fire rather than flammable fluids. Douse any matches with water prior to disposal.
- It is recommended that campfires be placed at least 25 feet away from trees, grass, leaves, tents/sleeping units, or other flammable materials. Keep campfires small, no more than three feet in diameter by three feet in height. Secure a 10 foot open space perimeter around the fire site; keep foot traffic a distance of at least three (3) feet away from any campfire.
- Avoid igniting a campfire on windy days as sparks can spread rapidly to combustible materials; monitor weather conditions at a camp site to ensure changing wind directions do not carry sparks toward flammable objects.
- Never leave a campfire unattended; keep water, a shovel, flashlight, gloves and other supplies close at hand to minimize the need to leave the site; stack extra wood upwind and at a distance, yet within sight of the campfire.
- Monitor children closely; loose clothing, burning food items (marshmallows, hot dogs, etc.) and metal skewers can be potential hazards. Do not permit running or playing near open flames. Keep first aid kits on-hand.
- Use plenty of water to douse a campfire. Once applied, stir embers and reapply water to ensure all coals are completely extinguished. Shovel dirt or sand to cover the site. Do not let campfires burn themselves out as underlying root systems can combust and spread fire underground. If it's too hot to touch, the campfire is too hot to leave.





Halloween Fire Precautions

Family traditions often include the carving of pumpkins, “trick-or-treating” and hayrides in late October. Some simple steps can make this holiday safer and minimize the risk of fires and injuries for children and adults alike.

- Instead of candles, use battery-operated lighting or LED units in pumpkins.
- Implement a “no smoking” policy on hayrides or other activities. Keep corn stalks and flammable decorations well away from high traffic areas.
- Select costumes that are flame retardant and have minimal edges/surfaces which could ignite if exposed to sparks or open flames. Teach children to drop and roll in case of a costume fire.



Leaf Burning

Fallen leaves are often considered a nuisance by property owners, however, alternative methods of disposing natural yard materials (mulching, composting, etc.) should be considered rather than burning. If deciding to burn leaves:

- check with local fire officials to determine if any outdoor burning bans are in effect.
- select a location away from any structures, trees, or other flammable materials to create the leaf pile; do not use fluids to ignite leaves.
- ensure smoke is not directly inhaled as burning leaves can create toxic fumes. Monitor wind conditions closely; be considerate of neighbors and their property.
- thoroughly douse all embers with water once leaves have burned; do not leave ignited or smoldering leaf piles unattended.

Indoor Heating : Fireplaces, Heaters, and Wood Stoves



Colder temperatures often prompt families to use additional heating sources in homes. While effective, these units may pose potential hazards if not used properly or if not regularly maintained or monitored. The following are basic precautions families can take to ensure the safe use of internal heating devices:



Wood Stoves

- Carefully follow the manufacturers’ installation and maintenance instructions; select units with solid construction, such as plate steel or cast iron metal.
- Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges and door seals for smooth joints and seams.
- Use only seasoned wood for fuel; do not use green wood, artificial logs, paper or trash.
- Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from wood stoves.

Heaters

- Citizens should only purchase heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Ensure the unit has a thermostat control mechanism, and an automatic shut-off feature.
- Do not place items on top of heating units; keep combustibles at least three feet away from a heater and unplug the unit when not in use.
- Never fill kerosene heaters with other fuel sources; only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Use kerosene heaters in a well-ventilated area; refill the unit outside, taking precautions to not over-fill the tank.

Fireplaces

- Have chimney or wood stoves inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Leave glass doors open while burning a fire; this aids combustion and minimizes creosote build-up in the chimney. Securely close the metal mesh screen to keep sparks and debris from leaving the fireplace area. Close glass fireplace doors when the fire is extinguished. Always use a heavy metal, mesh screen with fireplaces that do not have doors.
- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.
- Keep air inlets open, and never restrict air supply to fireplaces or wood stoves.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around fireplaces and wood burning units.
- Keep roofs and chimney areas free of leaves, pine needles, and other debris to minimize risk of fire.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or other debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- Place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate prior to igniting a fire.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside the home.



Did You Know?

Decorations are the first items to ignite in more than 1,000 reported home fires each year.



Safely Celebrating the Holidays

Artificial Trees:

Flame retardant artificial trees are recommended over live trees for household decorating purposes. Check manufacturers' labels to confirm materials are fire resistant prior to purchase.

Selecting a Live Tree:

Only choose trees which have firm, green needles; tree trunks should be sticky to the touch. To

test a tree, firmly strike the tree trunk to the ground; if a significant number of needles fall it is an indication that the tree is too dry and is a potential fire hazard.

Caring for a Live Tree:

- Place live trees in areas far from heating sources (fireplaces, heat vent, space heaters, etc). Be careful that candles, cigarette ashes, or other sparks do not come in contact with the tree. Use lights that have been tested for safety – do not use old or repaired lights on trees. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times; live trees should not be kept in the home for more than two weeks. Ensure a fire extinguisher is placed nearby in case of a tree fire.

Disposing of a Live Tree:

- Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. Properly dispose of live trees by taking them to recycling centers or approved refuse sites or placing them for pick-up by a refuse service.



Maintaining Holiday Lights:

- Inspect holiday lights each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, cracked sockets, and excessive wear before placing them in or on the home. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory.

Do Not Overload Electrical Outlets:

- Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord or power strip before plugging the cord into a wall outlet. Check wires and lights regularly to ensure they are not warm to the touch.

Do Not Leave Holiday Lights Unattended:

- Turn off all decorative lights before leaving the residence or retiring for the evening. Unplug extension cords and power cords from the wall outlets.

Use Only Non-flammable Decorations:

- All decorations should be non-flammable/flame retardant and placed away from heat vents. Check periodically to ensure ornaments, decorations, and tree branches are not retaining heat from nearby lights.

Disposing of Wrapping Paper:

- Dispose of wrapping paper in regular household refuse containers, never in fireplaces or burning barrels. Burning paper can create dangerous sparks that may result in a chimney fires or ground fires.

Holiday Candles:

Although candles are a common symbol of the holiday season, they can create fire hazards. It is recommended that citizens use battery powered candles in lieu of open flames. If choosing to light candles, ensure they are secured in stable holders that will not tip over and placed out of reach of children and household traffic areas. Extinguish any used matches in water before placing them in a trash can. Never leave burning candles unattended or place candles near holiday trees, packages, decorations or other flammable items.



Holiday Cooking:



Baking treats and preparing holiday meals enhance holiday celebrations—however, the following cooking-related safety tips can aid in reducing the risk of fires in the kitchen and other areas of the household.

- Check the oven to make sure all components are working properly; replace any faulty elements prior to using the unit.
- Cook items at recommended times/temperatures; avoid increasing oven temperatures to “speed up” processes.
- Ensure oven units are off when not in use and monitor them regularly if cooking for extended periods; refrain from using ovens to heat chilled rooms.
- Regularly check counter-top heating devices (such as roasters, crock-pots, electric skillets, etc.); do not overload kitchen circuits with heating units.
- Never use a turkey/game fryer inside or near a structure; follow manufacturers' safety instructions for operating the device. Never try to douse a grease fire with water; ensure a fire extinguisher suitable for grease fires is available. Never leave a fryer or hot grease unattended.

Dangerous Misuse of Gasoline or Other Fuels



Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids to:

- exterminate yellow jacket nests or other underground insect habitats
 - treat insect bites
- clean tools or engine components
- remove stains from clothing or other materials
- ignite tree stumps or other debris

Spring and Summer Fire Precautions:

Spring Cleaning:

- When spring cleaning, remember to never mix cleaning products and keep all chemicals away from heating sources. Use chemicals according to instructions, securing them away from children and pets after use. Dispose of used cleaning towels with chemical residue in approved containers.
- Clear any downed limbs, dried plant materials and other debris from around structures; clear at least a 15-foot perimeter around units and trees.

Mowing:

- Obtain gasoline and other fuels for mowers and weed eaters in approved containers; store in cool areas, away from heat sources. Fill containers carefully and according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Never store gasoline containers in vehicles; only transport gasoline in trunks or firmly secure them away from passenger areas. Take direct routes home when hauling fuel products.
- Never smoke or ignite lighters/matches while mowing, or while repairing/refueling lawn mowers.

Fireworks

- If using fireworks, remember to observe local laws; keep water/fire extinguishers nearby in case of a malfunction. Do not ignite fireworks in containers or near spectators, structures, trees or other flammable materials.
- Do not try to re-light fireworks that do not properly ignite, but rather soak any unused items in water prior to disposal.
- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place; if on-site, keep firework supplies at a distance from the launch point.

Grilling:

- Only use propane or charcoal grills outside and at least 10 feet away from tents, decks or other structures. Ensure propane tank components are functioning properly; always check valves before and after grilling.
- Secure a three (3) foot child-safe perimeter around the grilling area; keep lighter fluid, matches and other ignition tools secured and away from children.
- Clean any drippings from grease traps to minimize the risk of fire.

Boats/Watercraft:

- Always shut off boat/watercraft motors prior to refueling; turn off all fans and heating devices.
- Ensure nozzles are grounded to the fuel intake; leave space in the tank for fuel expansion. Clean any spills immediately; check the bilge for fuel leakage and odors. After fueling and before starting the motor, turn on the blower for at least four minutes to ventilate the system.
- Install smoke detectors on enclosed watercraft; check batteries routinely. Only install heating/cooking sources approved for marine use.

Pool Chemical Safety:

- To prevent chemical fires, use pool chemicals according to manufacturers' recommendations and securely store them outside of the home, in a dry location, and well away from heat sources.
- Isolate pool chemicals from other product containers and label containers to identify their contents. If the chemical container is damaged, promptly and properly dispose of the chemicals.

Yearly Fire Safety Checks



Citizens are reminded to routinely review the following items and procedures throughout the year in case of a fire emergency:

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, and electrical hookups to major appliances; ensure all are working properly—clear away any dust build-up that could be a potential hazard.

- Check extension cords for signs of wear or damage.
- Inventory household chemicals; properly dispose of outdated products.
- Clean or repair address numbers on the home or mailbox to ensure they are visible from the street.
- Test flashlights, portable radios, and batteries; replenish other stored preparedness supplies.
- Practice fire drills with family members; update evacuation plans as needed to reflect any changes in the household.
- Report any potential fire hazards to local authorities and utility companies (limbs on power lines, natural or propane gas odors, etc.).

Other Safety and Preparedness Measures

- Create an all-hazards family emergency plan.
- Compile an emergency contact list; note phone numbers of family members, neighbors, physicians, and other primary contacts. An on-line emergency plan template is available at www.vaemergency.gov/ReadyVirginia/MakeAPlanForm or visit www.dof.virginia.gov for additional information and safety tips.
- Keep emergency supplies on-hand in case of a crisis, including water, canned food, and essential medicines.
- Review your locality's emergency operations plans and services; visit www.campbellcountyva.gov/depts/publicsafety/Pages/index.aspx for additional preparedness and safety information.



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Sources and Resources:

Safety Resource

www.safetyresource.org

Seasonal Fire Safety Tips

<http://safety.rice.edu>

FEMA

www.usfa.fema.gov

National Fire Protection Agency

www.nfpa.org

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

www.vaemergency.com

Windsor Fire Services

<http://www.windsorfire.com>

Local Contacts:

Campbell County Fire Marshal

Campbell County Public Safety

Randall Johnson

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Campbell County Department of Forestry

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Campbell County Fire Departments:

Altavista Fire Company

Brookneal Fire Department

Brookville-Timberlake Fire
Department

Concord Fire Department

Evington Fire Department

Gladys Fire Department

Lyn-Dan Heights Department

Rustburg Fire Department

Red House Fire Department