



PRESS RELEASE

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Fire & Rescue Request Assistance in Preventing Outside Fires

Outside fires, often caused by human activities, pose a significant threat to structures and human life; one such example are mulch fires. During the fall season, mulch becomes drier due to the weather's temperature, wind conditions and lack of rainfall, therefore mulch fires become more prevalent. Mulch is a prime location for fires ignited by spontaneous combustion or by pedestrians improper discarding of smoking materials, in or near a mulch bed or from motor vehicles. Spontaneous combustion occurs when heat builds up within a thick layer of mulch (6 inches or more), smolders, and creates a fire which can easily extend upward into a structure. Temperatures, produced by a mulch fire, are enough to ignite adjacent combustible wall finishes, especially vinyl siding, located on the exterior of the building.

The Prince William County Fire & Rescue System request your assistance to "Help Us Help You" in preventing outside fires by following these simple safety tips:

Proper Disposal of Smoking Materials

- **NEVER** discard smoking materials such as cigarettes, cigars and lighted matches in plant pots, mulch-laden landscapes, flowerbeds, shrubs, bushes, grassy areas or woods.
- Use large, deep, non-tip/sturdy ashtrays to prevent smoking materials from igniting nearby combustibles.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are completely out – ***Put It Out. All the Way Every Time. You can douse them in water or sand.***
- Protect your home or business by providing a designated area for individuals to properly extinguish and discard their smoking materials.
- Use fire-safe cigarettes.
 - Fire-safe cigarettes have paper bands that slow the burn if the cigarette is left unattended. Look for the "FSC" letters on the packaging.

Landscaping

- Provide a reasonable amount of space between flammable vegetation and your home or business by creating a fire-wise/fire-safe area.

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- It is highly recommended to avoid the use of mulch within 18" of a structure with combustible siding.
- Avoid using highly combustible plants; use fire resistant plants (*visit your local nursery for assistance*).
- Remove dead plants, trees and shrubs, wood, debris and low tree branches.
- Keep plants watered during the heat of the summer and on warm windy days throughout the fall.
- Remove small trees and plants growing under trees; they permit ground fires to jump into the tree crown.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet from your home.
- Provide proper clearance for electric devices, e.g., decorative lights.

Additional Safety Tips

Most homes and businesses have exterior water faucets/spouts, purchase a hose(s) that will allow you to not only water your landscape but also serve as a fire hose. In the event fire occurs among your landscape, the fire hose will help to saturate the area with water in an attempt to prevent the fire from further spreading to vegetation surrounding your home or business.

The Prince William County Fire and Rescue System, advises the public, "Whether at home or on the go, if you discover an outside fire, Call 911 Immediately!"

For additional information regarding smoking fire safety, contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 703-792-6360, visit U.S. Fire Administration [usfa.fema.gov](https://www.usfa.fema.gov), and the National Fire Protection Association [nfpa.org](https://www.nfpa.org).

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