



# Outdoor Fire Pit Safety



Whether you call it an Outdoor Fire Pit or a Fireplace and have a small budget or large, it's very important to know the best safety practices for fire pit use so everyone can enjoy them while maintaining a safe environment for all. The River Forest Fire Department, along with its Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Partners would like to offer the following Safety Tips.



Autumn. The word invokes images of leaves changing color, of warm apple cider, and of sitting around a fire pit with friends and family, trying not to think about how you have to rake all those leaves. Unfortunately, injuries due to fire pits have been trending upward over the last several years. Between 2006 and 2012, total injuries increased nearly threefold from 1,300 per year to 3,600 according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Between 2011 and 2019, the U.S. averaged 4,107 cases of injuries caused by outdoor fire pits. In 2020, injuries jumped 59% to a total of 6,551. Maybe the pandemic caused more people to seek refuge around the fire pit. Many of these Individuals may not have been aware of the dangers of fire pits and the safety precautions that should be taken to avoid injury.

Proper positioning of a fire pit is essential to prevent the fire from spreading to a new spot. The International Fire Code requires wood burning portable outdoor fire pits to be located at least 15 feet away from a structure or other combustible material. A recreational fire (defined as not being in a store-bought outdoor fire pit) must be at least 25 feet away from structures and combustible material. Hazards can exist both above and below as well. The area above the fire pit should be clear of any overhead hazards such as tree branches, overhead wires, or awnings. The area below the fire pit should be clear of combustible material. Never place a fire pit directly on a wooden deck. Fires should not be lit on windy days or during droughts. Always have an appropriate method of extinguishment, such as a garden hose or bucket of sand, at the ready. Keep children and pets 10 feet away from the fire pit at all times. A competent individual must be present at all times the fire is burning. Even when the best practices are followed, accidents can happen, and people can be hurt. Minor to moderate burns should be treated by running cool, not cold, water on the burn for 3-5 minutes and then covered with a clean dry cloth. Severe burns require going to the emergency room immediately. Make sure that everyone knows to Stop, Drop, and Roll if their clothes catch fire.