

Fire Safety Alert

Mulch Fires Are More Common Than You Think!

Hundreds of mulch fires are reported every year in every state. You can help prevent mulch fires!

Mulch fires can burn buildings, burn the woods and burn people. Most are started by people; so most can be prevented.

Your fire department is frequently called upon to extinguish a fire that is burning in bark mulch, often against the side of a building. Sometimes the occupants of the building catch the burning before it gets out of hand and put it out with water. Without these actions, people may have been killed or injured or many of our beautiful buildings might have been destroyed.



The Harrisonburg Fire Department developed the idea for this pamphlet.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Abingdon Region Office:

Phone: (276) 676-5488 ; FAX: (276) 676-5581
Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise and Wythe counties

Salem Region Office:

Phone: (540) 387-5461 ; FAX: (540) 387-5445
Alleghany, Bath, Bedford, Botetourt, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Henry, Highland, Montgomery, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Roanoke and Rockbridge counties

Farmville Region Office:

Phone: (434) 392-4159 ; FAX: (434) 392-1550
Amelia, Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Powhatan and Prince Edward counties

Charlottesville Region Office:

Phone: (434) 977-5193 ; FAX: (434) 296-3290
Albemarle, Amherst, Arlington, Augusta, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Frederick, Goochland, Greene, Loudoun, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, Page, Prince William, Rappahannock, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Warren counties

Tappahannock Region Office:

Phone: (804) 443-2211 ; FAX: (804) 443-3164
Caroline, Charles City, Chesterfield, Essex, Gloucester, Hanover, Henrico, James City, King & Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northumberland, Richmond, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Westmoreland and York counties

Waverly Region Office:

Phone: (804) 834-2300 ; FAX: (804) 834-3232
Accomack, Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Isle of Wight, Northampton, Prince George, Southampton, Surry and Sussex counties, and cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk and Virginia Beach



Virginia Department of Forestry

Central Office
900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 800
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903
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MULCH FIRES

*A serious threat to your home,
property and family*



Virginia Department of Forestry
www.dof.virginia.gov

Fire Safety Alert

There has been a significant increase in the number of fires that occur in landscaping mulch. These fires are particularly dangerous due to their proximity to homes and structures. The fire starts in the landscaping mulch, spreads into the shrubbery and then to the home or building. Other factors such as below average rainfall, extremely dry conditions, warm temperatures and abnormal winds increase the risk of serious damage from mulch fires.

The risk of a mulch fire is more common than one might expect. This is a problem that we all share. Many commercial and public facilities no longer allow smoking inside the facility as a result of today's laws and policies. Cigarette and cigar smokers often discard lighted smoking material, including lighted matches, into the landscaped areas as they enter the building.

Businesses, universities, community colleges, local governments and homeowners take pride in the outward appearance of their buildings and homes. We as employees, students and visitors enjoy these landscaping efforts as well. Mulches are commonly applied after shrubs are planted in the landscape. Mulches are chosen for a variety of reasons including aesthetic appeal, color, price, organic content, nutrient content, reduction in weed competition, dust abatement and soil moisture retention. Regardless of choice, proper care must be taken to prevent mulch fires.



What Can You Do?

People Aware are People Who Care

In order to reduce the potential for a fire in landscaping mulch, follow these guidelines:

- Be aware of this danger.
- Recognize when it gets hot and has been dry for an extended time, which enables these fires to start more readily.
- If you smoke, PLEASE use the provided receptacles to discard your smoking material and matches.
- If you see anything smoking in a landscaped bed, put it out if you can and report it to someone inside the building. If the burning material is not thoroughly wet or removed, it may re-ignite.
- Grounds maintenance crews should be aware of the conditions that are favorable for mulch fires and increase surveillance of mulch beds in the afternoon when fires are more likely to occur.
- Provide proper receptacles for smoking materials at all entrances to public buildings and in designated smoking areas. Do not use mulch in or near these areas.
- Provide a minimum of an 18-inch clearance between landscaping mulch beds and combustible building materials. Ensure proper clearance to electric devices, such as decorative lights, by following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Keep landscaping mulch beds moist if possible.



For More Information

To learn more about protecting your home, property and family, contact your local fire department, landscape architects, Master Gardeners, home supply businesses or the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Consult the following Web sites for additional information:

www.dof.virginia.gov

www.firewisevirginia.org

www.firewise.org