

Fire pits are a fantastic addition to any homestead or rural backyard. They are attractive, inexpensive to use and help to extend the use of your yard through the fall and winter. But when you use a fire pit you are literally playing with fire! Careless misuse could not only set your own house ablaze, but also could spark a grass fire and endanger others nearby.



Fire Pit Safety

Positioning Your Fire Pit

Whether you are using a portable fire pit or planning to install a permanent one, positioning is key to safety:

- Make sure the fire pit is, at minimum, 10 feet away from any structure or neighboring yard—25 feet is preferable.
- Do not position a fire pit under a covered porch or low hanging tree branches.
- Always place a fire pit on a non-flammable surface, such as patio blocks or concrete.
- **Do not put a fire pit on a wooden deck or directly on grass.**

Preparing Your Fire Pit

- Clear all flammable materials away from your fire pit before using it. Five feet is a good distance. This “break” in vegetation will help prevent an escaped fire from spreading.
- Piling dirt or rocks around the pit will also help prevent any fire on the ground from escaping.
- The fire pit should be at least 6 inches deep at the center and 2 feet across, to help keep the embers and flames contained.

Lighting Your Fire Pit

- Always check wind direction before you light a fire and remove anything flammable downwind of the pit.
- If it is too windy, do not light your fire pit.
- Do not use lighter fluid to light a fire pit; instead, a commercial fire starter stick with kindling on top is ideal.
- Do not use any flammable fluids (gasoline, lighter fluid, etc.) to light or relight fires.

Using Your Fire Pit

- Never leave a fire pit unattended.
- Never leave children or pets unattended near a fire pit.
- Consider investing in a wire mesh cover to keep embers inside and help prevent children or pets from falling in.
- Limit the amount of fuel you put in the fire—just put what's necessary to keep it burning gently.
- Don't put garbage or paper products into the fire. They can easily spark and throw off embers or burning remnants.
- Don't wear flammable or loose-fit clothing while near the pit.
- Don't burn soft woods like pine or cedar. These can “pop” and throw sparks.
- Even if you follow all of these guidelines, accidents still happen. Keep a container of water and a hose nearby in case of an emergency.

Extinguishing Your Fire Pit

- Always have a shovel nearby to extinguish any escaped flames and to put out the fire itself.
- Extinguish with water: drown it and stir it with the shovel to make sure it's fully extinguished.
- Dispose of the ashes in a safe manner; keep a metal can that is used solely for ash storage. Even after 2 or 3 days, ashes can still be hot enough to cause a fire.
- Do not discard hot ashes in a compost pile, paper bag, cardboard box or anything that is combustible.

If you follow these guidelines and safely utilize your fire pit, it can be a wonderful addition to your yard—don't forget the smores!