



DPS | Montgomery County
Department of Permitting Services

Permitting Requirements for Open and Recreational Fires

When is a permit needed from the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) Fire Code Compliance (FCC) team?

Permits are required for outside recreational fires (open to the atmosphere on public property) where the potential exists for firebrands or embers to loft into surrounding areas and ignite nearby combustible materials and spread the fire. Examples include but are not limited to: bonfires (regardless of size), recreational fires that are part of special events, and open fire features in proximity to people or structures. During a Statewide or local fire ban, no open fires are allowed regardless of an approved permit.

Permits are not needed for the following:

- Cooking fires using a grill, smoker, or barbecue on private property.
- Permanently installed outdoor fireplaces, portable chimeneas, patio heaters, and manufactured fire pits.
- Campfires in designated burning areas of a campground.

Keep in mind that the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) may have separate and additional permit requirements. Also, smoke should not cross property lines. Fires should not be lit on windy days (sustained winds greater than 15 miles per hour), and when there is heavy fog or during smog alerts. Fires should not extend past 10 p.m. and must be constantly attended by an adult.

Cooking equipment and other fires not requiring a permit should be kept at least 10 feet from residential homes, structures, and property lines. Cooking equipment and recreational fires must be at least 20 feet from apartment-style buildings or other commercial establishments.

For complaints, questions, and concerns, contact the DPS FCC team at [MC 311](tel:240-777-0311) or 240-777-0311.

DPS is located at 2425 Reddie Drive, 7th Floor, in Wheaton. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. weekdays, and no appointment is necessary to get assistance. For more information, visit the DPS website at montgomerycountymd.gov/dps.

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