



Help Prevent Mulch Fires



Mulch is a combustible material that can be easily ignited by improperly discarded smoking materials. Hundreds of small and large fires are started this way every year. The risk is that what starts as a small outdoor mulch fire can quickly spread to buildings. A mulch fire can be well underway before someone notices or is alerted by smoke alarms or sprinkler systems activating.

How Mulch Fires Start

- In many mulch fires, the smoldering mulch tunnels under the surface and then breaks out into open flame.
- Mulch that is piled too deeply, more than a few inches, can build up heat and spontaneously catch fire.
- Mulch fires start more readily when the weather is hot, and it has been dry for an extended time.

Tips for Property Managers, Building Owners & Landscapers

- Provide a minimum of an 18-inch clearance between landscape mulch beds and combustible building materials, such as wood, vinyl siding and decks.

- Use non-combustible mulch such as rock or pea stone around gas meters and combustible portions of the structure.
- Provide proper receptacles for smoking materials at all entrances to public buildings and in designated smoking areas. Place them at least 18" away from the building, do not mulch in these areas and remember to regularly empty smoking receptacles.
- Keep mulch beds moist when possible.

Be a Responsible Smoker

- If you smoke, remember to properly dispose of all smoking materials.
- Always use appropriate receptacles for disposing of smoking materials and matches.
- Do not discard cigarettes in mulch or potted plants.
- Use ashtrays that won't burn or catch fire and that are deep enough to contain butts. Wet butts down before throwing out.
- Never throw lit smoking materials out of a car window, it may start an unintentional fire.