

FIREFIGHTERS REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN PREVENTING OUTSIDE FIRES

For Release

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Outside fires, often caused by human activities, pose a significant threat to structures and human life; one such example are mulch fires. As the weather becomes warmer, mulch becomes drier due to temperature conditions and lack of rainfall, making mulch fires more prevalent. Mulch is a prime location for fires due to improper discarding of smoking materials, by pedestrians, in or near a mulch bed or from motor vehicles. According to the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc., mulch ignites, smolders, and produces an open flame, which can easily extend up and into a structure. Temperatures, produced by a mulch fire, are enough to ignite adjacent combustible wall finishes, especially vinyl siding, located on the exterior of the building.

Over the past few weeks, firefighters, in Prince William County, have responded to numerous outside fires. Help us help you in preventing outside fires by following these simple safety tips:

Proper Disposal of Smoking Materials

- **NEVER** discard smoking materials such as cigarettes, cigars and lighted matches in plant pots, mulch-laden landscapes, flowerbeds, shrubs, bushes, grassy areas or woods.
 - Use large, deep, non-tip/sturdy ashtrays to prevent smoking materials from igniting nearby combustibles.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out – **Put It Out. All the Way Every Time.**
- Protect your home or business by providing an area for individuals to properly extinguish and discard their smoking materials.

Landscaping

- Provide a reasonable amount of space between flammable vegetation and your home or business to create a fire-wise/fire-safe area.
- It is highly recommended to avoid the use of mulch within 18" of a structure with combustible siding.
- Avoid using highly combustible plants; use fire resistant plants (*visit your local nursery for assistance*).
- Remove dead plants, trees and shrubs, wood, debris and low tree branches.
- Keep plants watered during the heat of the summer.
- Remove small trees and plants growing under trees; they permit ground fires to jump into the tree crown.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet from your home.

- Provide proper clearance to electric devices, e.g., decorative lights.

Additional Safety Tips

Most homes and businesses have exterior water faucets/spouts, purchase a hose(s) that will allow you to not only water your landscape but also serve as a fire hose. In the event fire occurs among your landscape, the fire hose will help to saturate the area with water in an attempt to prevent the fire from further spreading to vegetation surrounding your home or business.

Acting System Chief Tim Keen, of the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System, states, "Whether at home or on the go, if you discover an outside fire, Call 911 Immediately!"