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Open Burning Memo

Arlington is 1 of 22 communities in which "open burning" is not allowed at all due to the density of population and the close proximity of buildings within their borders.

The Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Arlington Fire Department limit open burning for public health and safety reasons. *Open Burning* means burning under such conditions that the products of combustion are emitted directly to the ambient air space and are not conducted thereto through a stack, chimney, duct, or pipe. This includes above or underground smoldering fires. Open burning pollutes the air and can make it difficult for people with respiratory problems to breathe. Further, when the air is stagnant, open burning can pose smoke and odor nuisances to nearby residents, particularly in densely populated areas. Open burning can also pose a safety risk when it is not adequately controlled.

The limits on open burning do not apply to outdoor cooking. Chimeneas, outdoor fire pits, open outdoor fireplaces, and similar appliances designed for the primary purpose of heating and burning are prohibited, in part because they often do not burn clean materials, and further because they may present fire hazards in densely populated areas. The primary purpose of these appliances is not cooking, therefore they are not to be used, and fire officers and firefighters will extinguish fires created by the appliance.

However, natural gas and LP fueled heaters and fire pits, may be permissible so long as they neither pose significant fire risks nor emit significant smoke and meet the following conditions:

1. The owner/operator complies with manufacturer guidelines and directions;
2. The owner/operator maintains a fire extinguisher with a current inspection tag in the nearby vicinity; and
3. All heating units are kept a safe distance from combustibles, especially structures.

If residents have questions about open burning fire officers should advise them to refer to the below references. Personnel with questions should contact the Fire Prevention Office.

References:
MGL Chapter 111 Air Pollution Emergencies
310 CMR Department of Environmental Protection
MGL Chapter 148 section 5

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