



# GENERAL ORDER

## GENERAL ORDER 610.11

### Open Fires, Recreational Fires, and Outdoor Cooking, Heating, or Other Similar Devices

#### OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL

Issue Date: October 28, 2005

Revision Date: January 16, 2018

#### 1 APPLICABILITY

2 All personnel.

#### 3 POLICY

4 This General Order is in accordance with the Howard County Code, Section 17.104: Howard  
5 County Fire Prevention Code. This General Order provides information and procedures in order  
6 to provide uniform enforcement and understanding of open burning laws set forth in the  
7 Howard County Fire Prevention Code and Howard County Code, Title 12, Section 108: Air  
8 Pollution.

#### 9 DEFINITIONS

- 10 ➤ **Open Fire** – A fire where material is burned in the open or in a receptacle other than a  
11 furnace, incinerator, or other equipment connected to a stack or chimney.
- 12
- 13 ➤ **Outdoor Cooking, Heating or other similar devices** – Equipment used for outdoor  
14 cooking, heating, atmosphere or other similar devices that use electricity, charcoal,  
15 propane gas, natural gas, wood products or other fuel for its heat source. This includes,  
16 but is not limited to: barbeque grills, gas and charcoal fired grills, hibachis, smokers,  
17 chimineas, luminaria, etc.
- 18
- 19 ➤ **Recreational Fire** – The outside open burning of any material for pleasure, religious,  
20 ceremonial, cooking, or similar purposes.

#### 21 PROCEDURES

##### 22 GENERAL:

23 Title 12, Section 108 of the Howard County Code **prohibits all Open Fires except for the**  
24 **following types:**

- 25 • Fires for the non-commercial cooking of food (regulated by the Fire Code).  
26 • Recreational Fires (regulated by the Fire Code).



# Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services

## GENERAL ORDER

- 27 • A fire that is necessary for one or more of the following reasons:
  - 28 ○ For the prevention of a fire hazard that cannot be abated by other means.
  - 29 ○ For the instruction of the public, firefighters, or industrial employees.
  - 30 ○ For the protection of public health or safety when other means for disposing of
  - 31 dangerous or explosive materials are not available.
  - 32 ○ Public Officials, in the performance of their official duties, may set an open fire or
  - 33 give permission for an open fire, with the concurrence of the Health Officer, if all
  - 34 reasonable means are employed to minimize smoke.
  - 35 ○ The Howard County Health Department, Bureau of Environmental Health, may issue
  - 36 written permission for fires set in the course of agricultural operations in growing
  - 37 crops, raising fowl or animals or in accepted forestry practice. The permit shall not
  - 38 allow the burning of ordinary household or farm trash and debris.
  - 39 ○ The public can be directed to the following County website for detailed information:
  - 40 <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=U51pNXyJLgs%3d&portalid=0>.
  - 41
  - 42

### 43 RECREATIONAL FIRES:

44 The following regulations governing the use of Recreational Fires shall apply:

- 45 • The fire shall not be more than 5 ft. X 5 ft. X 5 ft. in dimension and shall not burn longer
- 46 than 3 hours;
- 47 • The fire shall be located at the maximum distance from any structures (a minimum
- 48 distance of 50 feet);
- 49 • A safe area of at least 10 feet will be maintained around the fire;
- 50 • At least 2 fire extinguishers shall be maintained at the location;
- 51 • The fire must be constantly attended by an adult;
- 52 • People shall not be permitted to play in the fire;
- 53 • Burning will be done with the consent of the appropriate property owner;
- 54 • Fuel for the fire shall consist only of seasoned dry firewood and shall be ignited with a
- 55 small quantity of paper. **Trash, rubbish, yard waste, and debris shall not be burned;**
- 56 • The fire must be completely extinguished when completed;
- 57 • If severe winds are prevalent (greater than 10 MPH), the fire may not be ignited;
- 58 • If a state or local public official or fire official declares a ban on Open Fires because of a
- 59 drought, dry conditions, or other atmospheric conditions, the fire is not permitted.
- 60

61 Before lighting the fire, the responsible party shall call the Howard County Communications  
62 Center at 410-313-2929 and notify the on-duty supervisor about the fire. When the fire is  
63 completely extinguished, again notify them of the same.

64  
65 Failure to follow these regulations may result in the issuance of a Civil Citation and the levy of  
66 fines of up to \$1,000 per violation.

67  
68  
69  
70



# Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services

## GENERAL ORDER

### 71 **COOKING AND OTHER OUTDOOR FIRES:**

72 The non-commercial cooking of food is regulated by the Fire Code. A cooking fire is considered  
73 to be an:

- 74 • Outdoor fireplace, fire pit, barbeque grill or other similar device used solely for the  
75 purpose of preparing food.
- 76 • In-ground fire pit used for cooking that does not exceed 2 ft. in diameter and 1 ft. in  
77 depth, and is surrounded by a non-combustible fire ring.
- 78 • In-ground earth-covered fire pits used for roasting food.

79

80 The following safety requirements shall apply to all cooking and other non-Recreational Fires:

- 81 • All fires must be at least 15 feet from a structure and not underneath an overhang;
- 82 • Manufactured chimineas, luminaries, fire pits, and similar devices shall be equipped  
83 with spark arrestors and the fire area shall not exceed 3 ft. in diameter and 2 ft. in  
84 height.
- 85 • Devices shall not be kindled or stored on a balcony or deck.
- 86 • Flammable gas cylinders (attached to a device or unattached) shall not be stored in a  
87 structure or on a porch, deck, or balcony.
- 88 • Other than in those devices specifically designed to be used with charcoal or gas, fuel  
89 for the fire shall consist only of seasoned dry firewood. **Trash, rubbish, yard waste, and  
90 debris shall not be burned;**
- 91 • The fire must be constantly attended by an adult;
- 92 • A fire extinguisher or hose must be immediately available to extinguish the fire;
- 93 • If severe winds are prevalent (greater than 10 MPH), the fire may not be ignited;
- 94 • If a state or local public official or fire official declares a ban on Open Fires because of a  
95 drought, dry conditions, or other atmospheric conditions, the fire is not permitted.

96

97 Failure to follow these requirements may result in the issuance of a Civil Citation and the levy of  
98 fines of up to \$1,000 per violation.

99

### 100 **FIELD OPERATIONS RESPONSE TO OPEN FIRE INCIDENTS:**

101 For Recreational or cooking fires, the responding Department unit(s) shall confirm that the fire  
102 is in compliance with the requirements set forth in the Fire Code.

103

104 For all other Open Fires, ensure that the party has an approved permit from the Bureau of  
105 Environmental Health and that the fire is in compliance with Health Department requirements.

106

107 If the party is not in possession of a valid permit, or if the fire is not in compliance with the  
108 requirements set forth by the issuing agency, then the fire shall be immediately extinguished.

- 109 • If the party is cooperative, the Department Officer-In-Charge shall obtain contact  
110 information (name, address, and telephone number), complete the Illegal Fire Reporting  
111 Form (Attachment A), and fax to all appropriate agencies, as indicated on the Form,  
112 prior to the end of the shift.



# Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services GENERAL ORDER

- If the party is not cooperative, or if there is a history of illegal fires at the location, the Department Officer-In-Charge shall contact Fire Dispatch and request the On-Call Fire Marshal to respond to assist.

## REFERENCES

- Howard County Code, Title 12, Section 108: Air Pollution
- Current Version of the Howard County Fire Prevention Code

## SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES

Updated format and title.

## FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Illegal Fire Reporting Form

## APPROVED

John S. Butler, Fire Chief  
Office of the Fire Chief

Author:

Gordon Wallace, Assistant Chief  
Office of the Fire Marshal



Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services  
**GENERAL ORDER**

ATTACHMENT A



**HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**  
 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Suite 400, Columbia, Maryland 21046  
 410-313-6000

JOHN S. BUTLER, FIRE CHIEF • ALLAN H. KITTLEMAN, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

*Internal Memorandum*

**Subject: Illegal Open Fire, Illegal Recreational Fire or Unsafe Use of Outdoor Cooking, Heating, or other similar devices. Open Burning on Construction Site**

**To:** *Assistant Chief, Office of the Fire Marshal  
 (Fax: 410-313-6066)*

*Housing Inspector, Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits  
 (Fax: 410-313-1861)*

*Assistant Director, Bureau of Environmental Health  
 (Fax: 410-313-2648)*

**Date:**

As a result of an emergency incident, the following violation of the fire code was noted:

Illegal Open Fire	Illegal Recreational Fire	Unsafe use of outdoor cooking, heating or similar device
<b>Reason for Violation</b>		
No Permit		Requirements not met
Hazardous condition created		
Cooking, heating, etc. device used on a balcony, deck or under overhang		
Cooking, heating, etc. device used within 15 feet of a structure		
Propane cylinder stored on balcony or in a structure		
Trash or debris being burned in device		
Open burning on a construction site		
Other		

**The responsible person was cooperative and the fire was extinguished.**

Address of Incident:			
Responsible Person:			
Telephone:			
Officer in Charge:		Date:	

**Officer In Charge (OIC) – Please fax form to all above prior to the end of your shift.**

Revised 2/9/2015