

May's Safety Tips

Further focusing on Community Risk Reduction (CRR) in our response area, there are a few trends that stand out from April's run reports.

EMS

We had over 10 falls that resulted in lift assists and trauma (Injuries). As the weather gets warmer and we all get eager to step outside, please be careful

- Walking around – yard debris and soft ground can lead to trips and falls.
- Drink lots of water – hydration is critical at all times especially outside.
- If you live alone – let others know what your plans are, remember the buddy system saves lives.

Fire

Fires/Wildland Fires dominated April with over half our call volume. Many of us have outdoor fire pits as a reminder here are some safety tips that I've compiled from various sources.

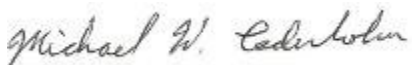
1. **Check your local ordinances** – Some municipalities require a permit
2. **Check with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)** – website at: <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/forestry/fire/burn-permit> or call **866-922-BURN** (866-922-2876).
3. **Check the Wind Conditions** - Before you start up a blaze in your fire pit, check the local weather forecast. Don't use your fire pit on unusually windy days, as the wind can make it hard to light the kindling and could blow sparks to surrounding brush or structures, potentially starting a fire. Also, always check the direction of the wind before you start your fire. Advise guests to sit on the upwind side of the pit to keep clear of the smoke. If you have a portable fire pit, consider moving it to a location with a natural windbreak—before you light the fire.
4. **Build the fire in the open** - Never light your fire pit when it's underneath the overhang of a building or beneath trees, and keep the immediate area around the pit clear of yard waste and other flammable materials. Wayward sparks can blow out of the fire and ignite nearby structures, dry wood, leaves, or other debris, and you could end up with a fire emergency.
5. **Don't burn construction lumber or household garbage** - To fuel your fire, go ahead and use the branches you sawed off that damaged oak tree after last winter's storms, or buy seasoned hardwood kindling and logs. You can also use softwoods like pine but know that they burn less efficiently and can give off more sparks and smoke than harder woods, leading to a less pleasant evening by the fire. But you should never burn construction materials like plywood, MDF, pressure-treated boards and posts, or chemically treated wood pallets. Construction lumber is treated with chemical resins, adhesives, and other substances like household waste that emit toxic fumes when burned—definitely not what you want to be inhaling (or eating) with your roasted marshmallows!
6. **Be ready to extinguish the flames** - Fire can be unifying and magical. It attracts people to its warmth and light and infuses outdoor gatherings with joy and romance. But it can also be an unpredictable, destructive force. If you've set your fire pit in a safe location and taken the speed and direction of the wind into account, you probably won't encounter any serious problems. But you should always keep a shovel and water at hand, just in case. In an emergency, you can use the water to quench the fire and the shovel to smother the flames by throwing dirt on them. You may also want to invest in a fire blanket, which can be used to

smother a blaze in or outside the fire pit, or (worst-case scenario) on one of your guests. And be sure to teach kids to "stop, drop, and roll" in the event that their clothes catch fire. You may never need any of these safety measures, but without them, a fun evening could end in tragedy.

7. **Keep chairs away from the fire** - Everyone knows to be careful around a fire pit, campfire, or chiminea, but in the heat of a s'mores session, folks may inch a little too close to the flames, and that's when hair, clothes, or other materials can catch fire. Keep chairs at a safe remove from the fire pit, and make sure your sleeves are rolled up and hair tied back when you're tending a fire or roasting food over an open flame. If your fire pit has a screen, use it.
8. **Never leave a fire unattended** - Even after a fire has died down and only glowing embers remain, do not leave it unattended—not even to dash into the house for a beverage or bathroom break. If you must leave, deputize a responsible party to stay with the fire, or extinguish the fire completely before leaving the scene. While tiny flames may seem innocuous, they're still a potential threat to your safety—after all, almost-extinguished fires have been responsible for some of the most severe wildfires in U.S. history. Pour water over live embers, and turn logs to make sure all sides of the wood have stopped burning before you call it a night.
9. **Drink responsibly** - Fire and alcohol don't mix. Not only is alcohol flammable, but overindulgence in alcohol impairs coordination, judgment, and reflexes, which could result in injuries to anyone gathered around the perimeter of a fire. If you or your guests are going to drink by an open fire, do so in moderation. Keep everybody a safe distance from the flames, and be ready to douse the fire in case of any alcohol-induced mishaps.
10. **Store firewood safely** - To keep a fire going all evening, you'll need to continue feeding it fuel. Take care, though, to keep firewood at a safe distance from the fire pit. You want to feed the fire at your own pace, not have it jump the fire pit and feed itself!

Nobody likes what should be a happy occasion to turn into a tragic one, but if it does, we are only three numbers away (911). Keeping you safe is what we do as we are always here to serve you.

Sincerely,



Chief Cederholm