



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AREA FIRE DEPARTMENTS ARE SEEING AN INCREASE IN CALLS FOR POSSIBLE ILLEGAL BURNING

Both Spokane Fire Department (SFD) and Spokane Valley Fire Department (SVFD) are experiencing an increase in calls regarding possible illegal burning. Warmer spring weather and social distancing has residents outdoors doing yard work and spring cleaning. We want to remind area residents that burning of garbage, including construction material, and the use of burn barrels are prohibited in the region. Burning outdoors, including yard debris, is not allowed in most areas of Spokane County. Recreational fires are allowed at this time.

Outdoor burning regulations and requirements can be viewed at SpokaneCleanAir.org/burning.

“Over the last six weeks, we’ve logged over 70 complaints from individuals being affected by smoke,” stated Julie Oliver, executive director for Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency. “Breathing smoke affects the respiratory system and is especially harmful to sensitive populations including youth, seniors, and those with underlying heart and respiratory conditions,” added Oliver.

Fire departments are experiencing an increase in call volume as well.

“Since January 1, 2020 Spokane Fire Department has responded to over 35 incidents of occupants burning yard waste, garbage or construction material” stated Spokane Fire Department Chief Brian Schaeffer. “Year round it is illegal to burn yard waste, construction materials and household debris. These items release particles into the air that are hazardous to breathe. In the midst of this respiratory health crisis be mindful of your recreational fire safety.”

“With the increase of smoke in the air, those with existing lung and heart complications are put at further risk, especially those suffering from symptoms of the virus.” Said Spokane Valley Fire Department Fire Marshal, Greg Rogers. “Not only does it hurt people with underlying conditions, but also first responders. It is critical that we not elevate the risk for anyone who

may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, and local air quality is imperative given the nature of what we are experiencing.”

Recreational fires that get out-of-control are a common cause of wildfires caused by people. You can be held financially responsible for the cost of fire department response and any property damage it caused.

If you are following regulations, please remember to “Be Fire Smart”:

- Use clean, dry firewood or manufactured logs,
- Burn 25’ away from any structure, like a house, garage, or fence,
- Have an extinguisher or charged water hose nearby,
- Stay near the fire,
- Keep any fire small; no larger than 3’ wide and 2’ tall, and
- Put out the fire completely!

During the COVID-19 crisis, local fire departments and first responders are working diligently to protect our health so that we can protect our community. Please help us by considering voluntarily limiting wood burning (indoors and outdoors). Many people in our communities are also extremely concerned about their respiratory health. Before starting an indoor or outdoor burn of any type, please consider the potential impacts on your neighbors and on local emergency responders.

For more information on current burn conditions, visit

<https://www.spokanecleanair.org/current-burning-conditions> or call the Burn Status hotline at (509) 477-4710.

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