



FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINE

Title: Open Burning		
Number: FPG-05	Effective Date: 01/01/2008	Revised Date: 03/01/2009
Code References: California Fire Code (CFC), California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 19, Merced Municipal Code (MMC), San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (Valley Air District)		
Note: <i>This guideline is a summary of Fire Department clarifications and interpretations of City and State Codes and nationally recognized standards in accordance with the currently adopted edition of the Fire Code. Information contained herein applies to typical circumstances and may not address all situations.</i>		

Scope

This Guideline has been developed to assist the public with rules and regulations that govern open burning.

Codes and Guidelines

This guideline shall apply to all burning in the City of Merced including agricultural burns, cooking fires, indoor and outdoor fireplace fires and other approved fires in accordance with the Valley Air District, California Fire Code, California Code of Regulations, Title 19 and the Merced Municipal Code.

Permits Required

A City of Merced Fire Code permit is required for agricultural burns and commercial barbecue pits. Additional permits and approvals are required by the Valley Air District.

Specific Requirements

1. Prohibited Fires

- a. All open burning is prohibited by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, unless it falls within the exemptions described in District Rule 4103- Open Burning. Examples of prohibited fires would be: bonfires, campfires, burn barrels and warming fires.
- b. Fires for cooking or permitted fires that are offensive or objectionable because of smoke or odor emissions or when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous shall be prohibited.



FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINE

2. Agricultural Burn Permits

- a. The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (Valley Air District) is the designated agency for the purpose of issuing burn permits. Please contact the Valley Air District at (559) **230-6000** during regular business hours, or (559) **227-7143** between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. seven days a week, or check on the website at **www.valleyair.org** for questions regarding burning guidelines or burn permits. Once a permit has been obtained from the air district you may contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at 209-385-6830 to obtain a Merced City Fire Department Fire Permit.
- b. Anyone with an authorized burn permit must contact the Air District on any day they plan to burn to receive a confirmation number. You must have the burn permit AND confirmation number on site while conducting your burn.

3. Cooking Fires

Cooking fires used for preparing food for human consumption do not require a permit from the Valley Air District. However, cooking fires such as a pit barbecue or larger cooking fires may have a tendency to cause a great deal of smoke and nuisance potential. The burning must be conducted while conforming to the following conditions:

- a. The fire is actually used for cooking food for human consumption.
- b. The fire is sized appropriately for the amount of food to be cooked.
- c. Fuel for the fire must be clean, dry charcoal and/or wood without coatings or preservatives. Burning other debris, including trash, demolition material, refuse, or garbage is prohibited.
- d. When any of the conditions defining a cooking fire end, no more fuel may be added to the fire and the fire shall be extinguished.
- e. Charcoal burners and other open-flame cooking devices shall not be operated on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction, with the following exceptions,
 - i. One and two-family dwellings.
 - ii. Where buildings, balconies and decks are protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system.



FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINE

- f. Liquefied-petroleum- gas (LPG) fueled cooking devices having a water capacity greater than 2.5 pounds shall not be located on combustible balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction with the following exception,
 - i. One and two-family dwellings
- g. The fire must be in constant attendance, located an adequate distance away from a structure or combustible material and have adequate means available to extinguish the fire.

4. **Fire Code Permit Requirements For Agricultural Burns and Commercial Fire Pits**

Once the permit inspection fee has been paid an inspection of the agricultural burn location or commercial fire pit will be conducted by the Fire Department. The following requirements must be met.

- a. Persons with a valid permit and confirmation number from the Air District and Fire Permit from the Fire Department are required to notify the City of Merced Dispatch Center at 209-385-6912 prior to burning. Advise the location and type of material to be burned.
- b. Open burning shall not be conducted within 50 feet of any building or other combustible material.
- c. A garden hose connected to a water supply or other approved fire extinguishing equipment shall be readily available.
- d. An adult knowledgeable in the use of the fire extinguishing equipment shall constantly attend burning material.
- e. The Fire Department is authorized to require that open burning be immediately discontinued if the fire constitutes a hazard or the smoke emissions are offensive to the surrounding neighbors.

5. **Fireplace Fires**

Indoor or outdoor fireplace fires are prohibited on days when the Air District declares a mandatory fireplace use curtailment for Merced County. There are exemptions to the curtailment if you live in an area that is NOT serviced by natural gas or the device is your sole source of heat. Contact the Valley Air District for more information at 1-800-SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) or www.valleyair.org.

6. **Outdoor Fireplace Fires**

Are allowed if they comply with the following conditions:



FIRE PREVENTION GUIDELINE

- a. It must not be a “wood burning device use prohibited” day as determined by the Valley Air District. This can be verified at 1-800-SMOG INFO (1-800-766-4463) or www.valleyair.org.
- b. Fuel is clean, dry wood with no debris, trash, garbage or refuse. Hardwoods are preferred because they burn cleaner and longer.
- c. The fire is contained in a fire bowl, chiminea or outdoor fireplace that is not larger than two feet (2’) in diameter. A homemade fire container is permitted if it is not larger than two feet (2’) in diameter and one foot (1’) in height. No roaring fires permitted.
- d. Use is restricted to residential settings.
- e. The fire must be in constant attendance, if enclosed in a barbeque pit or similar device it must be located at least 25 feet away from a structure or combustible material. There must be adequate means available to extinguish the fire.
- f. Conditions such as dry weeds or other hazards which could cause a fire to spread shall be eliminated prior to ignition.
- g. Discontinuance-The fire department is authorized to require open burning to be immediately discontinued if it is determined that smoke emissions are offensive to surrounding neighbors or it constitutes a hazardous condition.