FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:
RECREATIONAL & COOKING FIRES IN DES MOINES
Created: March 1, 2009 Revised: July 11, 2016
From the Office of the Fire Prevention Bureau – Phone (515) 283-4240

Can I burn in Des Moines?
No, it is illegal to burn within the city limits of Des Moines, including the annexed areas of Warren County. The Polk County Board of Health, Rules and Regulations, Chapter V, Air Pollution Control states, in part: “... It shall be unlawful for any persons to open burn or to permit open burning of any refuse, rubbish, garbage, landscape waste, or other combustible material within the city limits... from any source from and after September 21, 1983.” This policy and related information can be found at [http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/airquality/rules-and-regulations/](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/airquality/rules-and-regulations/). The City of Des Moines is required to follow the rules set forth by the Polk County Board of Health. For additional information regarding open burning, call the Des Moines Fire Prevention Bureau @ (515) 283-4240.

Can fire pits, chimineas, and similar devices be used to burn twigs, wood, leaves, and other yard waste materials within the city limits?
No, burning the aforementioned materials is prohibited within city limits of Des Moines, including the annexed areas of Warren County.

Why are fire pits sold in the city if we can’t use them?
It is not illegal for stores within the City to sell fire pits and chimineas. These items may be purchased for use outside of the City limits during camping and scouting activities. Customers who live in other cities may also purchase these items.

What is the difference between a fireplace and a grill, and can they be used to cook food?
Des Moines follows the rules established by the Polk County Board, the complete policy can be found at: [http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/airquality/rules-and-regulations/](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/airquality/rules-and-regulations/). Refer to Article III Section 5-7:

A “Fireplace”, for the purposes of Article III Section 5-7, means a structure, with an open recess at the base of a chimney or stack, with a grate for food preparation and provisions for under-fire air, for holding an outdoor fire off the ground.

A “Grill”, for the purposes of Article III Section 5-7, means a cooking utensil with a grate for food preparation and provisions for under-fire air, for holding an outdoor fire off the ground.

An outdoor fireplace or grill, as defined above, burning untreated wood or charcoal, may be used solely for the non-commercial preparation of food. The burning wood must be extinguished once the cooking is completed. Such outdoor fireplaces, grills, and fire pits shall not be used for the burning of yard waste materials, refuse, rubbish, or garbage.

Grills on balconies
1 and 2 family dwellings – the Des Moines Fire Department has no regulatory authority over these types of structures, however we do recommend that grills, especially charcoal-type grills, be at least 10 feet away from any structure or combustible material.

Multi-family dwellings (apartments, condos, townhouses, etc.) – the only grills allowed on the balconies of multi-family dwellings are grills that use no more than 1 twenty pound propane cylinder. Charcoal grills or similar type grills are not allowed.

Any comments or questions regarding the above information may be submitted to:

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Fire Prevention Bureau
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