

## **SUMMER FIRE SAFETY TIPS**

**Don Huber, Long Hill Township Fire Official**

**GIVEN THE EVENTS** of recent months it is safe to speculate that along with all the usual, mesmerizing sights, smells and sounds of summer so reminiscent of days gone by, this year we will all become all too familiar with many new practices and procedures fashioned to keep us safe and well through the season and beyond.

The point of this message is to serve as an important reminder that, whatever life-style changes and new experiences lie in our collective path, it is no less imperative that we observe long-standing and well-established summer fire safety practices in all our day-to-day activities in the weeks and months ahead.

According to the United States Fire Administration, the summer season is one of the most dangerous times of the year for injuries and fatalities related to fires. But the good news is that, for just about every summer activity with inherent fire hazards, there are many smart and simple ways to curtail any unwanted effects of such hazards, thus allowing summer time to do what it does best --- letting us have fun while making some great memories along the way.

With that in mind, here are some key summer time fire safety tips to consider and embrace:

**1. REMOVE CLUTTER AND UNNECESSARY STORAGE IN YOUR HOME:** Clutter and excessive storage can be added fuel to an unwanted fire and can impede escape from a home fire as well as obstruct or slow down firefighters attempting to make entry for search, rescue and fire suppression.



**2. CLEAR A FIRE-SAFE ZONE AROUND YOUR HOME:** Clear all dry vegetation, mulch, and trash from around your home exterior. Remove all organic debris, fallen leaves, encroaching vines, downed branches, firewood, and other combustible or flammable materials within this area. Make sure your house number is clearly posted and visible from the street for emergency responders and others to see.



**3. GASOLINE AND OTHER FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS:** Store gasoline and other flammables in approved containers in cool, dark environments out of your home or basement. Never refill lawn mowers or other gasoline-powered equipment while in operation or hot. Never use gasoline to remove grease or grime from hands, skin or clothes. Never use charcoal lighter fluid on burning or hot coals. Keep flammable liquids away from sources of ignition or your dreams of summer fun may all go up in smoke.



**4. BARBEQUE GRILL SAFETY:** Keep all barbeque grills at a safe operating distance from your home or other structures. Typically, charcoal grills at least 5 feet away; LPG (propane) grills at least 10 feet away; deep fryers at least 20 feet away. Never leave any operating or hot grill unattended by a responsible adult; keep all grills clean and grease-free; thoroughly wet down used charcoal briquettes after they have cooled and dispose in an approved receptacle away from your house or other structures;

OPERATING OR HOT GRILLS SHOULD BE NO KID ZONES



**5. RESIDENTIAL RECREATIONAL FIRES:** When using a commercial chiminea, fire pit or outdoor fireplace unit, always read and observe all manufacturer use, care and safety specifications. If your property is clear and large enough to construct a modest homemade fire pit, keep it reasonably sized and always:

- Maintain a safe distance (at least 25') from the perimeter of the fire pit to your house and any other structures (or other combustibles, flammable liquids or LPG vessels) on or near your property .
- Limit the overall height of any open flame to 2 or 3 feet above the burning materials
- Keep a properly-sized working fire extinguisher or charged garden hose in place at all times the fire is burning or smoldering
- Never leave an open burning or smoldering fire unattended by a responsible adult
- Only burn kindling and fire wood (no lumber, trash, debris or other refuse)
- Keep small children at a safe distance from the perimeter of the fire pit.
- Be mindful of high winds or extreme dry weather conditions that might preempt outside burning (check with Fire Official if uncertain).



**6. CAMP FIRES AND BONFIRES:** These are special group events that require some planning, preparation and safety guidelines to include:

- Obtain written permission from the property owner
- Apply for a fire safety permit from the Local Fire Official
- Notification of Local Police and Local Fire Official prior to lighting any fires
- Campfires may not be more than 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet
- Bonfires may not be more than 5 feet by 5 feet by 5 feet
- The near-end perimeter of the fire ring must be at least 25 feet from any structures
- Fuel for campfires or bonfires should consist of seasoned dry firewood ignited with a small quantity of paper, dry vegetation and small, fallen branches
- One 2 & ½ gallon water extinguisher or one 10 lb. ABC dry chemical fire extinguisher or a water hose connected to a reliable water source must be present for the duration of the burn activity
- At least one responsible adult must be on site for supervision of the entire burn activity
- Children may not be allowed within 3 feet of any open flames and must be closely supervised when in proximity to the fire ring to toast marshmallows or other permitted activities
- Running, jumping, strength contests or other unsafe activities should not be permitted in the proximity of a campfire or bonfire
- All fires must be completely and thoroughly extinguished before leaving the area; grounds around the camp fire or bonfire should be carefully examined for any hot embers or smoldering ashes
- Always check with the NJ Forest Fire Service website for any burn restrictions on the date of the event



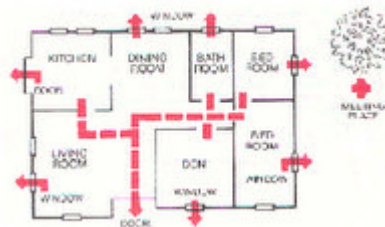
**7. FIRST AID FOR BURNS:** To treat minor burns, follow these steps: Cool the burn. Hold the burned area under cool (not cold), gently running water or apply a cool, wet compress until the pain eases. Avoid putting ice directly on a burn. Remove rings and other tight or soiled items. Cover injury site with a clean bandage. If warranted (particularly with small children and people with pre-existing health issues) follow up with a doctor. For more serious burns (beyond red skin and small blistering on no more than a 3 inch area of skin) protect the burn area with a sterile, non-stick dressing. Do not remove any clothing or material stuck to the burn area and do not soak, ice or apply ointments prior to dressing the injury site. Seek immediate medical attention.



**8. WEATHER EMERGENCY PREPARATION:** As we all know too well, the world is no stranger to severe weather conditions as well as large-scale natural and human-induced conditions of a catastrophic scale. Have a home emergency preparedness plan (along with adequate supplies and a survival kit) to facilitate a safe and effective evacuation or in the alternative, the need to shelter in place during the course of a major power failure or other significant emergency situation. Stay informed of any pending or prevailing emergency conditions by signing up for the free Long Hill Township ALERT System. For further assistance with developing such plans or signing on with the ALERT system, contact Long Hill Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Shayne Daly at [oemcoordinator@longhillnj.gov](mailto:oemcoordinator@longhillnj.gov)



**9. HAVE A HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN AND PRACTICE IT WITH FAMILY MEMBERS:** During this challenging time with increased numbers of people staying at home - and truthfully all-year-round - families should develop, review and practice their plan regarding what to do if a fire occurs in their home. Critical parts of the escape plan should include having working and properly located smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your home, practicing how to stay low to the floor when escaping during a real fire and to having a pre-arranged safe family meeting place outside of the home to make sure everyone is accounted for.



**10. KEEP A CARING EYE OUT FOR NEIGHBORS AND OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE:** Be aware of the people who are your neighbors, reside close-by or otherwise live around town and have or could have special needs especially during severe weather or other adverse conditions. Endeavor to provide whatever help you can and perhaps even consider organizing a group effort among other neighbors and friends to be such Angels of Mercy. A little bit of kindness and support can make a big difference in someone's life. Chose to make that difference happen. As my old fire captain used to say to his crew, "Watch out for each other".

It is hoped this information will be helpful in some small but meaningful way to all of you, your family, friends and neighbors, but in the event of an emergency just call 9-1-1 and help will be on the way. For further information or assistance please contact me, Don Huber at [fireofficial@longhillnj.gov](mailto:fireofficial@longhillnj.gov) or by calling the Township of Long Hill Fire Prevention Office at 908-647-8000 ext. 307.

**While supplies last we also have FREE ten-year sealed battery smoke alarms for eligible residents of Long Hill, courtesy of the NJ State Division of Fire Safety, Mayor Guy Pischerchia and the Long Hill Township Municipal Committee.**



Finally, if you or anyone you know is interested in becoming or otherwise learning about serving as a volunteer in the Township of Long Hill, our local volunteer organizations' contact information is provided below:

**MILLINGTON FIRE COMPANY**, 1891 Long Hill Rd. Millington, [www.longhillnj.org](http://www.longhillnj.org) 908-647-5882 Chief Patrick White

**STIRLING FIRE COMPANY**, 321 Somerset St. Stirling, [www.stirlingfirecompany.com](http://www.stirlingfirecompany.com) 908-647-2669 Chief John Whitmore

**LONG HILL FIRST AID SQUAD**, Valley Rd. PO Box 146, Gillette, [info@longhillfas.org](mailto:info@longhillfas.org) 908-647-2181  
Squad Captain: Bob English Squad President: Robert Hovanec

**LONG HILL COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)** or our **MEDICAL RESERVE CORP (MRC)**  
Shayne Daly, Emergency Management Coordinator, e-mail: [oemcoordinator@longhillnj.gov](mailto:oemcoordinator@longhillnj.gov)

**Thanks, and please leave the fireworks to professionals -Long Hill has the best of the best!  
Heed that advice and whenever you need your fingers, you will always be able to count on them.**



**HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY SUMMER...SEE YOU AROUND TOWN**