

The Fire 4-1-1

SPRING 2019

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Your Spring Checklist
- Can Your Mulch Catch Fire?
- Keeping You Safe Inside and Out!

Spring Into Fire Safety

Plants are budding and the trees are blooming as winter fades away and Spring brings on the warmer weather. As we reach a new season thoughts of Spring cleaning are here and Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System wants to be sure you are safe from the threat of fire.



This fire was likely caused by debris escaping an unattended outdoor fireplace. It caused \$220,000 in damages.

While you begin Spring cleaning, ensure walkways are clear of debris. Take this opportunity to discuss your Home Escape Plan with everyone in the family so they all know how to safely exit if there is a fire. Smoke alarms let you know there is a fire, so make sure they are working and that you are following all the maintenance guidelines per the manufacturer's specifications. Test your smoke alarms monthly. Don't forget to verify that your address is clearly marked so first responders can find you if there is an emergency. Be mindful of the importance of fire safety outside too! Use mesh screens on outdoor fireplaces and fire pits. Trim bushes, plants and trees surrounding your home and keep vegetation and debris away from the house. Spread mulch away from the house with a non-combustible barrier in between, such as rock or gravel. Ensure any trash accumulation, both inside and out, is properly disposed. Fire is Everyone's Fight!

Accidental Fire Data for Fiscal Year 2019

Fire Cause	Total Number of Fires	Total Dollar Loss Q3
Electrical	3	\$71,000.00
Cooking	1	\$5,000.00
Improper disposal of smoking materials	6	\$521,000.00
Combustibles in contact with heat source	4	\$422,900.00
Appliance malfunction	2	\$100,000.00
Mechanical Issue	1	\$55,000.00
Juvenile Related	1	\$2,000.00
Candles Related	1	\$25.00
Appliance Misuse	2	\$230,000.00
Improper Installation of Appliance	1	\$30,000.00

Total Number of Unintentional Fires

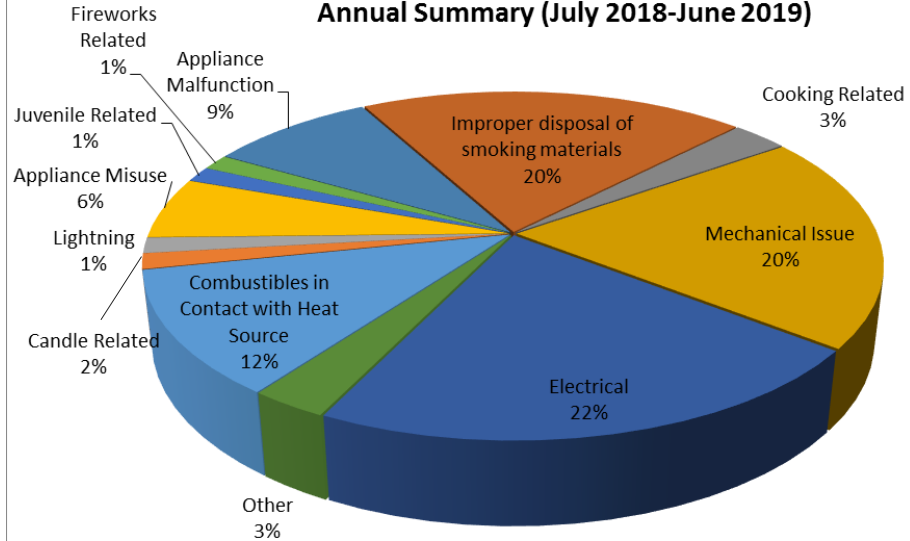
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Total Cost of Damages

\$1,436,925.00

*For more specific descriptions of fire causes visit www.loudoun.gov/firerisk.

Frequency of Accidental Fires by Fire Cause Annual Summary (July 2018-June 2019)



Mulch Fire Awareness

Mulch Fire Safety Tips:

- *Keep landscaped mulch beds as moist as possible especially during hot and dry spells.*
- *Use only approved receptacles to dispose of matches, cigarettes and cigars such as sturdy metal or ceramic containers filled with sand, located away from the structure.*
- *Consider using brick or non-combustible exterior siding when building or renovating a structure.*

During March 2019, firefighters in Loudoun County reported nine mulch related fires. These fires often go undetected and while they start small, they can quickly develop into a devastating fire causing major damage and put other's safety at risk.

The most common cause of mulch fires is human carelessness through the improper discarding of smoking materials. Smokers often discard lit smoking materials, including matches, into landscaped areas as they enter or exit a building.

"Businesses and residences should provide and maintain safe receptacles for the disposal of smoking materials," said System Fire Chief Keith Johnson. "Sturdy metal containers with sand, placed away from the structure, are best."

Fires that start in landscaping mulch or other organic planting materials can spread quickly into shrubbery, up exterior walls and into the home or building. For this reason, we recommend leaving 18 inches between mulch and combustible building materials such as vinyl siding and decks. Also, use non-combustible materials such as river rock, pea gravel or crushed rock for the first 18" around the base of a building with combustible siding and around gas and electrical meters. Check out more safety tips on the left of this page.



This fire was caused by improperly discarded smoking materials. The sprinkler system activated and extinguished the fire limiting the damage to \$5,000.

Outdoor Fire Safety

With summer just around the corner, families are spending more time in the great outdoors! It is important to be sure that these activities do not put anyone at risk for fires or burns. Don't let your summer become memorable for all the wrong reasons and follow these summer safety tips.

During your barbeque cookout:

- ✱ Only use BBQ grills outdoors.
- ✱ Keep grills at least 15ft away from combustible materials which includes the home siding and deck rails.
- ✱ Regularly clean grease or fat buildup from grills.
- ✱ Never leave your grill unattended.
- ✱ Keep children and pets away from the grill area.

Outdoor fireplaces, chimneas, and portable fire pits provide heat on the cool summer nights. While you enjoy some quality time outside remember:

- ✱ Place the appliance on a level, non-combustible surface, such as stone,

brick, or concrete. If you are unable to place it on a non-combustible surface, place a fire resistant pad underneath the appliance and monitor it closely.

- ✱ Keep the appliance at least 15 feet away from any home taking care to be aware of nearby combustible materials, such as decks, plants, or other outside decorative materials.
- ✱ Use a sturdy screen to contain sparking or flying embers.
- ✱ Soak ashes thoroughly with water and always let ashes cool before disposing of them into a closed metal container. The metal container should be kept outside, a safe distance away from your home.

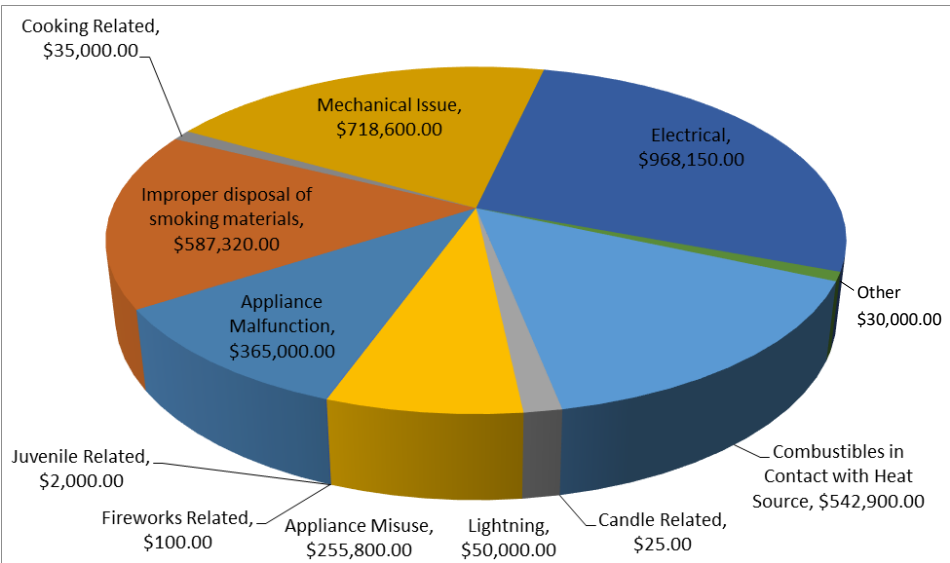
Do you plan on sitting under the stars by a crackling campfire? Keep your friends and family safe with these safety tips:

- ✱ Before setting up a campfire, be sure that it is at least 50 feet from a structure and anything that can burn.
- ✱ Campfires should be no larger than

three feet in diameter by two feet in height .

- ✱ Clear away dry leaves and sticks, overhanging low branches and shrubs.
- ✱ Keep children and pets a safe distance away while the fire is burning.
- ✱ Attend to the campfire at all times.
- ✱ Always have water or a shovel for dirt or sand nearby to put out the fire. Make sure to put it completely out before leaving the site.
- ✱ Avoid open burning on windy, dry days. It is easier for open burning to spread. For open burning regulations see box below.

Accidental Fire Dollar Loss By Fire Cause Annual Summary (July 2018-June 2019)



Open Burning Regulations

Open burning is the burning of leaves, trees, brush, yard and garden trimmings generated on-site of a residence, where street side trash service is not available for this purpose. The Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office enforces the regulation which was developed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) .

- ⇒ Open Burning is Prohibited May 1 to September 30
- ⇒ Open Burning is Permitted October 1 to February 14
- ⇒ Open Burning Allowed Only Between 4 p.m. and 12 a.m. February 15 to April 30

Before specific guidelines on Open Burning, visit www.loudou.gov/openburning.



**Loudoun County
Fire Marshal's Office**

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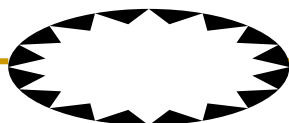
Fax: 703-737-8595

www.loudoun.gov/firemarshal

The Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) seeks to provide a safe working and living environment for residents, workers, and travelers within Loudoun County. The division investigates the origin of fires, explosive related incidents, as well as investigations into hazardous materials. Furthermore, we strive to reduce the risk of fire through the abatement of common fire prevention code violations. The public fire and life safety educational programs and juvenile firesetter intervention program are additional resources we deploy to help ensure the fire and life safety of the citizens and visitors of Loudoun County.

There are additional special operational programs, such as the Bomb Squad and the Canine Program. However, these are collateral responsibilities assigned to regular staff, which transcend section boundaries.

The FMO is comprised of a team of civilians and sworn law enforcement officers to ensure division goals are met.



Smoke alarms are one of the best and easiest safety features you can have to alert you and your family if there is a fire in your home. The Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System offers free smoke alarm assessments to residents. During the visit, fire-rescue personnel ensure the home is adequately protected by working smoke alarms. They also provide valuable information on other fire safety topics. To request an assessment visit www.loudoun.gov/smokealarms and complete the online form or contact your local fire-rescue station.

