

Open Flame Policy and Bonfires Policy

To preserve life safety and reduce the risk of fire, the use of candles and other open flame devices in Utah State University buildings is prohibited unless specifically approved by the University Fire Marshal. Such approval must be requested for:

1. Theatrical or other entertaining arts performances
2. Dining and food service areas
3. Special religious ceremonies
4. Educational and research purposes
5. Other purposes as may appear necessary

Once specifically approved for use in a laboratory or dining facility, the same or same type of open flame device may be used on multiple occasions without re-approval.

Bonfires

October 28, 2004

The tradition of having large open fires as part of the activities of various events such as Homecomings, "School Spirit rallies", and other celebrations has become an issue that should be addressed. These large "bonfire" activities are discouraged by the State Fire Marshal's Office and the Division of Risk Management, and in addition are not allowed by the State Environmental Quality Code. DCA 19-2-114 states that the allowable burning must be incident to horticultural or agricultural operations, burning of ditch banks incident to clearing for irrigation purposes, and the controlled heating of orchards. The bonfires do not fall into these categories.

The State Fire Marshal's Office and the Division of Risk Management both agree that the use of bonfires as part of a celebration creates an unreasonable risk and liability for the State, and there are alternative ways to have a visual effect provided, such as a pyrotechnic display under the control of a licensed pyrotechnician. The use of bonfires should stop. We should not wait until someone is burned or property is destroyed to then address the risk and liability.

The use of large fires in a celebration atmosphere also sends a very wrong message to the participants. Fire should not be connected to a celebration of something that has an otherwise positive outcome. We have seen incidents of major civil disorder after such events as the World Series, soccer matches, etc. where the participants set fire to vehicles and other combustibles and destroy other people's property.

Please start now to look at alternative methods of conducting these celebrations and budget accordingly. Also, ensure that this information is distributed to your staff involved in the planning of the bonfire celebrations in the past. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.