



All coastal agencies are committed to providing a great day at the beach. In order to do so, agencies wish to keep beaches in a safe, clean, sanitary and presentable condition. **The most important component of a great day at the beach is safety.** It is important that each coastal agency provide policies on various aspects of beach use, including beach amenities. One of the most popular of these amenities is the beach fire ring. **Fire rings present a special challenge because inappropriate use of fire rings is potentially very dangerous not only for the user, but for other beach goers.** Since the purchase, placement and maintenance of fire rings is expensive and time consuming, every effort must be made to assure that they are placed and maintained in a safe manner, and that they are used correctly.

- **A written fire ring policy or ordinance is needed, approved by the appropriate bodies.**

Items to be considered include:

- **Only allow ground fires in approved fire rings.** Beach users should not build, maintain, or use a fire on any beach that is not contained in an agency provided/approved fire ring. Approved fire rings are concrete and placed at beach locations where fires are allowed. **Fires are prohibited on beaches where fire rings have not been provided.** It can be permissible to build and maintain a fire confined in a BBQ, hibachi, stove or similar cooking device unless the device is positioned so as to unreasonably endanger the safety of beach users or the integrity of public or private property. Ideally, portable fire rings will not be allowed. If allowed, propane powered barbecues or portable fire rings are far safer than units that use coals or wood, but do present the same danger of super-heated sand below these devices.
- **Limit the use of combustibles. Fires should be built in fire rings using fire materials limited to charcoal, clean wood, or paper products,** none of which contains asphalt, cloth, foam rubber, landscape debris, metal (including nails and other hardware), paint, plastic, rubber, sealer, stain, wood preservative, or any similar material capable of producing noxious fumes, odors, or be capable of leaving any type of solid residue other than ash. Pallets are not an appropriate combustible material, and should not be burned, and are prohibited in some locations.
- **Limit the amount of combustible material in fire rings.** Fire materials should not exceed a height of more than twelve (12) inches above the upper edge of the fire ring and must be completely contained within the inside edge of the fire ring.
- **Insure appropriate use.** No person should use a fire ring for any purpose other than fires for cooking or warmth or for the deposit of coals. Fire rings are not to be used for disposal of trash.
- **Define appropriate fire ring supervision.** Children should not use fire rings without adult supervision. Establish an age for unsupervised use.
- Ideally, the best technique is to allow a fire to extinguish itself, or “burn out.” If heavy use does not allow this process, then **insure appropriate techniques for extinguishing fires.** No one who has built, maintained, or used a fire ring on the beach should abandon the fire until all ignited fire fuel material has been completely exhausted or extinguished. Sand, dirt, or similar material should not be employed as extinguishing materials. Water is the appropriate extinguishing material. Caution should be taken to apply the water appropriately, so that material does not splash outside of the fire ring. Extinguished ashes should not be covered but left in fire rings.



- All unused fire material should be removed from the beach and the adjacent public areas of the beach or park. **All refuse or rubbish adjacent to the fire ring must be removed** from the beach or placed in trash receptacles provided for this purpose, so that the beach is left in a clean, sanitary, and presentable condition.
- **Establish hours of use.** It should be deemed that no one may use a fire ring on any beach during the hours that the beach is closed to public use.
- Do not allow inappropriate beach use, and “holding” of fire rings. No one should possess any household furniture around a fire ring, nor is it acceptable to use furniture, barricades, tape or other devices to “hold” fire rings for later use. **Fire rings are to be used on a first come, first served basis unless the agency has a reservation policy in place.**
- **Notify users of the importance of fire ring safety.** Signage and education are very important.
  - Special caution must be used around fire rings.
  - The area inside the ring may contain hot coals.
  - The outside surface of the fire ring can be very hot.
  - Maintain a safe distance from the fire ring.
  - Natural conditions and/or shifting sands may cause variations in the height of the fire rings.
  - Exercise caution when next to a fire ring to avoid tripping or falling.

## Glossary of terms:

Combustibles: Material to be burned

Fire ring: A device, usually made of concrete, designed for burning wood and other appropriate combustibles for recreational use

Holding: The process of “reserving” a fire ring by placing objects near or on the ring

Pallet: A wooden, portable platform used for transport or storage of materials, Pallets are often made of treated lumber, and use nails to secure the pallet. Pallets are not an acceptable combustible for fire rings, and are banned by many beach agencies.

**Disclaimer:** *This BMP is advisory in nature and meant to be a starting point for developing protocols, not the final word. The general information has been reviewed by beach managers and scientists and is considered acceptable practice. Each organization must develop appropriate guidelines according to its own specific needs and conditions.*