



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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City Approves Ordinance to Regulate Combustible Landscape Cover

Harrisonburg, Va. - In April, a new ordinance was approved that will work to prevent fires from spreading so quickly from mulch, or combustible landscape cover, to buildings.

The ordinance requires owners of multi-family residential structures to install an 18-inch buffer between combustible landscape cover material (mulch) and a structure with combustible siding. The ordinance does not apply to buildings constructed from noncombustible material such as brick and cinderblock. Although still encouraged to do so, this also does not apply to single family homes, unless they are used as a facility for child care or adult care.

From January 2008 through December 2014, the Harrisonburg Fire Department responded to more than 200 fires involving mulch, some resulting in significant damage.

“The goal of this new ordinance is to decrease the chances of a mulch fire spreading at a rapid rate into a building thereby creating a life threatening situation for the occupants” said Mike Armstrong, HFD’s Deputy Fire Marshal.

With landscaping season in full swing, property owners are encouraged to make these changes now but will have until July 1, 2016 to be in full compliance.

The mission of the Harrisonburg Fire Department is to serve the public in protecting them from loss of life and damage to property. Adopting a mulch setback ordinance reduces the risk to life and property associated with mulch fires.

For more information about the new ordinance go to the Harrisonburg Fire Department website at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/city-mulch-ordinance> or contact the HFD Fire Marshal’s Office at 540-432-7703.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 50,000 people. The Harrisonburg Fire Department is rated fire class 2 on a scale of 1 to 10 ranking by the Insurance Service Organization (ISO). In the nation, only 750 fire departments have received a class 2 rating. More information about the Harrisonburg Fire Department is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/fire.

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