

The University of Alabama

Policy & General Procedures for Bonfires

POLICY

If a bonfire is planned on University property or in connection with a University sponsored or supported event at another location, a review of the plans will be conducted. Primary responsibility for the construction of the bonfire, and the safety of participants, spectators, and others, will remain with the sponsoring organization or group (Sponsor). The review by the University will be to assist the Sponsor in carrying out Sponsor's responsibilities, and to coordinate the activities of interested parties.

PURPOSE

This document provides general guidelines and procedures for those who plan a bonfire as part of a University event. The policy is intended to establish general guidelines to assist the Sponsor, describe requirements of the University and others, and outline the review process.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- A. Plans for bonfire events must be reviewed and approved by the Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Grounds and may be subject to the approval of the Vice President of Financial Affairs, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- B. The Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Grounds will appoint an individual(s) to serve as the Coordinator(s) for the event. The Coordinator will serve as the contact for the Sponsor and other groups involved.
- C. Bonfire plans must adhere to applicable regulations, codes, ordinances and rules established by the City of Tuscaloosa and Tuscaloosa County. The Sponsor is responsible for such compliance, and is responsible for filing and obtaining all appropriate permits and licenses. All costs of the permits and licenses will be the responsibility of the Sponsor.
- D. The Sponsor may be required to have an engineering assessment performed by a credentialed professional (i.e. Professional Engineer – "P.E." or equivalent) to provide assistance in the bonfire design.
- E. The only area that has been determined to be appropriate for a bonfire is the Quad in the open area in Zone F-G/5-6 (<http://www.uafacilities.ua.edu/grounds/quad-map.pdf>) where the Homecoming bonfire has traditionally been held. The Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Grounds may consider other proposed locations subject to availability and suitability of the site. Also considered will be the potential damage to University property.
- F. The Sponsor will be required to pay all of the cost associated with the bonfire including but not limited to construction, access control, debris removal, grounds/landscaping restoration, additional police protection, security, safety measures, etc.

- G. To protect the safety of the public, the Sponsor will be required to secure the services of the Tuscaloosa Fire & Rescue Service (TFRS) to assist with starting and extinguishing the bonfire and to respond to any emergency situations that may arise. The Coordinator will assist the Sponsor with coordinating participation and support from the TFRS. Any off-campus bonfires not within the jurisdiction of TFRS shall be under the control of the fire department for the jurisdiction where the bonfire is held.
- H. TFRS has the authority to reject a bonfire permit request and may at any time withdraw authorization if there is a change in plans, conflict with applicable codes or concern with public safety.
- I. To allow for ample time to review the plans and engage the necessary resources, the request of a bonfire must be submitted to the Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Grounds no less than thirty (30) days prior to the planned event. The requesting party shall complete a grounds use permit request (<http://www.uafacilities.ua.edu/grounds/>) with narrative describing the scope, purpose, location and design of the bonfire, including the Sponsor's plan for protecting safety and security.

Prior to construction, the Coordinator will conduct a meeting with all parties involved to review safety issues, security precautions, construction guidelines and any other topics.

BONFIRE REQUIREMENTS

- A. To retain debris/ashes and to allow for cleanup, the base of the bonfire shall have 3-4" of clean topsoil or sand. A tarp or other form of ground cover below the topsoil or sand to may be needed to prevent liquid accelerants from penetrating the soil.
- B. Prior to the Sponsor building a bonfire, the Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Grounds will make arrangements to have area utilities and other underground infrastructure located to prevent damage during construction or resulting from heat generated by the bonfire.
- C. A bonfire shall be constructed in a safe manner by the Sponsor. The bonfire may not be more than 20 feet high, by 25 feet wide. Most importantly, the bonfire design and construction method must include consideration for structure stability. The design shall consider the need for adequate airflow to support combustion.
- D. The bonfire should typically not burn longer than two (2) hours and TFRS should be on-site with adequate equipment and personnel until the fire is fully extinguished. Unless prior approval is granted, the bonfire should be extinguished no later than midnight. In the event TFRS is called to an emergency, leaving a scheduled bonfire without adequate fire response equipment or personnel, the bonfire may be delayed or cancelled at their request.
- E. Sponsor shall ensure that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will be on-site and prepared to respond to any emergency medical needs prior to the start of the bonfire.
- F. Fuel for the bonfire should consist of seasoned dry firewood and other untreated wood products such as pallets or construction debris. No pressure-treated or chemically-treated wood may be used. If pallets are used, all nails, staples and metal brackets may need to be removed to prevent future injury. The wood should be adequately protected from rain and other moisture sources. Once construction of the bonfire is completed, excess wood and debris must be removed from the site.

No accelerants (e.g., gasoline, charcoal lighter fluid, kerosene, diesel fuel, etc.) or any other flammables may be used to start or re-start a bonfire unless under the control and direction of the TFRS. However, some wood may be presoaked with accelerants or other more flammable materials such as cardboard or paper may be used, if approved. Manufactured fire starter logs may generally be used to start the bonfire.

- G. Potential severe weather (i.e. thunderstorms, intense rain, hail, etc.) or steady winds of 15 mph or higher, or gusts of wind that exceed 20 mph may delay the start of the bonfire. Weather conditions will be monitored by TFRS on a continuous basis beginning at least three (3) hours before the scheduled start. If wind speed increases to a dangerous level or weather conditions deteriorate after the bonfire is started, TFRS may elect to extinguish the fire to protect the public and area property.
- H. A secure zone shall be established by the Sponsor, generally no less than 100ft. from the base of the bonfire. The materials used to secure the area should generally consist of yellow tape and/or rope secured to upright posts. The only persons to be allowed by Sponsor inside the secure zone are members of TFRS and other persons assigned the duty to monitor the crowd.
- I. During construction, the Sponsor should keep the area secure and there should be at least two individuals from the Sponsor to watch the area on a 24 hour-a-day basis.
- J. Sponsor should not allow any smoking or open flames or other ignition sources in the construction zone. If the overnight watch has lanterns, grills or camp stoves they must be kept at least 25 feet from the bonfire and flammable liquids.
- K. As a part of the continuous monitoring during construction of the bonfire, the persons responsible should remain clear of the bonfire base by no less than 25ft.
- L. Any powered equipment used to construct the bonfire must use designated routes and will need to follow the directions of the Assistant Vice President of Grounds to avoid damage to landscaping, irrigation systems, sidewalks, etc.
- M. All persons involved in the construction shall wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to include boots or shoes with substantial soles, hardhats, eye protection and leather gloves. Depending on the bonfire and construction plan, other PPE may be required.
- N. When stacking wood, once the pile reaches a height of six (6) feet, the remaining wood must be put in place with a lift truck, front end loader or other powered device and all persons assisting shall remain clear of the equipment and at least 25 feet from the base of the stack.
- O. While stacking wood, at least one non-student adult supervisor or organization sponsor should be present to control the personnel involved and to direct the operation of the equipment.
- P. Only trained and experienced personnel should be allowed by Sponsor to operate powered equipment such as lifts truck, front-end loader, skid-steer loader, post-hole auger, etc.

CONTACT

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