

- **A message from the Union Beach Fire Department**

MULCH FIRES AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM

Spring is the time when we are thinking about new landscaping or sprucing up our property for the coming season. It is also a good time to think about fire safety in your landscaping!

Thousands of mulch fires occur across the United States every year, especially during warm, dry summer weather. Although small mulch fires are easily extinguished, an unchecked fire often spreads to shrubbery and structures, endangering human life and causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage to homes and public buildings.

Although mulch is attractive used around shrubs or in flower beds, a mulch-free zone of 2 to 3 feet around a building is the safest way to prevent serious damage caused by mulch fires. Pea gravel or crushed rock is a safer solution if you need mulch next to a building. New regulations now prohibit new application of mulch within 18" around combustible exteriors of buildings, such as wood or vinyl, but not brick or concrete. Residential buildings with six units or less are exempted from the regulation, but all homeowners may want to adopt these safety practices.

Regular watering that keeps mulch consistently moist helps to prevent ignition. Avoid placing mulch near decorative lights or other electric devices. If you notice a mulch fire, extinguish the fire and then report the fire to 911 immediately. Awareness of the possible fire dangers associated with mulch is the first step in preventing mulch fires. Due to laws that prevent smokers from smoking in public places, smokers often throw cigarette butts into mulch near a building entrance. Providing fire-proof receptacles in public places, and proper use of the receptacles, helps to eliminate mulch fires ignited by smoldering cigarettes. Remember these tips for the smoker in your house, also! Following these recommendations during your spring spruce up will keep the chance of a mulch fire occurring during the hot, dry days of summer!