

WOOD-BASED MULCH – APRIL 15, 2025

Division of Fire Safety Issues Notice about New Fire Code Regulations on the Use of Mulch Around Combustible Building Materials

[Division of Fire Safety Issue...](#)nj.gov.

The regulations, **effective on April 15, 2025**, require that a minimum of **18 inches** of space separate mulch beds from combustible building materials. That includes spaces off a deck, porch, balcony, or any other portion of the building that is constructed of combustible material.

[New NJ Fire Code Regulation...](#)

Under the new regulation, wood-based mulch and other combustible landscape materials are prohibited in the following areas: - Within **18 inches** of any building or structure -Within 18 inches of a deck, porch, balcony, or any other combustible building component

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Regulations Respond to Numerous Fires Involving Mulch Which Have Spread to Buildings and Caused Significant Property Damage, Injuries, and Deaths

TRENTON, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Division of Fire Safety is informing residents and businesses that fire code regulations have changed regarding the use of mulch around combustible building materials. These new regulations were adopted with a great deal of support to prevent future occurrences of property damage, injuries, and deaths due to mulch fires.

The regulations, effective on April 15, 2025, require that a minimum of 18 inches of space separate mulch beds from combustible building materials. That includes spaces off a deck, porch, balcony, or any other portion of the building that is constructed of combustible material.

Additionally, the space requirement is mandated between any designated smoking area, as defined at [N.J.A.C. 5:70-3, 310.2](#), and a mulched area.

Landscaping mulch has become the predominant choice for both residential and commercial ground cover. However, its use comes with certain risks, particularly during dry seasons.

“The regulations were adopted for the safety of residents, occupants of buildings, and first responders. Fires originating from ignited mulch have resulted in significant property damage, injuries, and deaths, and compelled regulators to include these provisions in the adoption of the 2018 International Fire Code,” said State Fire Marshal and Division of Fire Safety Director Richard J. Mikutsky.

“Multiple warning notices about how and why mulch can become a serious fire hazard have been sent to fire officials across the state,” said Lou Kilmer, CPM, Chief of the Division’s Bureau of Fire Code Enforcement. “Wood-based mulch is combustible and may be challenging to extinguish once it ignites. Fires can often smolder undetected for a period of time, leading to delayed responses, which can cause them to grow larger and cause more damage if left unchecked. That is why it is essential to maintain safety precautions to prevent a fire outbreak.”

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MULCH FIRE PREVENTION

- Provide proper clearance for electric devices such as decorative lights by following the manufacturer's instructions.
- When the weather is hot or there has been little or no rain, wet the mulch down to prevent mulch fires.
- Consider replacing mulch with decorative stone.

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXEMPT FROM THE NEW REGULATIONS:

- Owner occupied, one- and two-family or attached single family structures used exclusively for dwelling purposes.
- Most townhomes that are classified as R3, R4 & R5; and
- Buildings made of noncombustible material, such as warehouses.

The Division of Fire Safety strongly recommends following these provisions for safety reasons even though these types of buildings are exempt from the provisions.

For more information on the new fire code regulation, including exemptions, please visit [New Jersey Department of Community Affairs \(DCA\) | Codes & Regulations](#) on the Division of Fire Safety website.

The Division of Fire Safety serves as the central fire service agency in the state. The Division is responsible for the development and enforcement of the State Uniform Fire Code, as well as engaging the public on community risk reduction strategies, assisting in fire department preparedness, and conducting firefighter training programs.

DCA offers a wide range of programs and services, including local government management and finance, affordable housing production, fire safety, building safety, community planning and development, disaster recovery and mitigation, historic preservation, and information privacy.

For more information about DCA, visit <https://nj.gov/dca/> or follow the Department on social media: