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NEWS RELEASE

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Now is the Perfect Time to Apply for a Burn Permit

The weather is finally transitioning from winter to spring and the scent and sight of smoke is filling the air. There have been controlled burns in fields and backyard fireplaces are back in service after the winter months. Though the two fires are quite different, a permit from the City of Norfolk Fire Division is required for each.

When applying for a permit, the first step is to determine what kind of burn you will be applying for. There are two main types of burn permits the Norfolk Fire Division issues: open burning and recreational (closed) burning. Both permits are free of charge.

Open Burning is the burning of unwanted materials – such as: brush, leaves, grass, trees; any natural products – where smoke and other emissions are released directly into the air. Open burns are performed mainly outside of city limits and include bonfires and controlled burns of agricultural fields.

In an open burn only tree limbs, vegetation, and non-treated wood are allowed to be burned. Items such as shingles, plastics, tires, and chemically treated wood can emit toxic fumes into the air and are not permitted to be burned according to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

Norfolk Fire Chief, Scott Cordes, believes that having an open burn can be a positive step towards preventing a future unwanted event.

“Everything that is cleared now is helping us in the long run. By getting rid of these materials in a controlled burn, it can help prevent them from starting a fire in an uncontrolled situation,” he said.

Recreational (Closed) Burning is a very small, controlled fire that is set in approved, commercially available “outdoor fireplaces.” These “outdoor fireplaces” or “patio fire pits” must be placed on a firm, non-combustible surface at least 15 feet from any building. Closed burning is allowed in city limits, but all fires within city limits must only be used for recreational or cooking purposes.

When having a closed burn, only natural sawn, dry wood may be burned. Leaves, garbage, paper, trash, wire, etc. is strictly prohibited. If the Police or Fire Division receives a nuisance complaint about smoke in the area, you will be asked to extinguish the fire at that time. If multiple complaints about smoke are received, or unsafe

practices are observed, the permit can be revoked and not re-issued. Free permits for closed burning are issued annually.

“In both open burning and recreational type fires, we want citizens to be able to achieve their desired outcomes. All we are respectfully asking is that it be done with good judgement and common sense,” said Cordes.

The City of Norfolk Fire Division enforces the State of Nebraska’s ban on open burning. Nebraska state statutes have placed a ban on all bonfires, outdoor trash fires, and fires for the purpose of clearing land throughout the state 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This ban can only be waived by the issuance of a burn permit from the local fire department at the time each burn is to be conducted, and once annually for a recreational burn.

At the time of request of a burn permit, Fire Division personnel may come and evaluate the safety of the location for the burn. They will look at how far away the fire is from the roadway, from power lines, building structures and neighboring properties.

Each permit is a personal privilege and the responsibility of the permit holder. Please be aware of the conditions of the ground cover and current weather forecast to make the best decision for burning. Ideal burn conditions include a high dew point, after a rain (or some moisture), and low wind speeds.

“Even when all of the directions are followed an accident could occur where the fire gets away to nobody’s fault of their own. Simply give us a call and we’ll send a truck out and help with the situation,” said Cordes.

To apply for a burn permit, come to the north door of the Norfolk Fire Division located at 701 Koenigstein. The permit must be completed at the fire station, indicating the person responsible for the permit, location, date and time of the burn.

Have a safe Memorial Day weekend.

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Contact: Norfolk Fire Division/ 402-844-2050