

Fire Department June 2023

Well spring has sprung. The fire department was more than ready for the wildfire season as normal. We have many tools as our disposal. Two trucks with "slide in" tank/pumps with many accessories. We always get a DNR tuneup/refresher before the season begins. Crazy for how much snow and how wet it's been that we are actually in an elevated fire danger as we speak.

I give credit to the 90% of islanders who follow the safety guidelines put forth by the state concerning burning on your property. Anything bigger than 3'x3'x3' recreational fire in a fire ring needs a permit. These are easy to get online or at Town Hall. The yearly permit clearly states to call in for current conditions and daily burning guidelines. This permit is for a 6'x6'x6' fire and nothing more. Special permits for anything bigger can be issued from the DNR in Washburn.

As for the other 10% who don't care about these simple-to-obtain permits and calling the fire department to give us a heads up, there's an expensive DNR ticket that comes with a call from us. The first ticket is a slap on the wrist in my mind. But if the same property owner violates again, the next ticket is a trip to court with possible jail time. If our department has to respond to a non-permitted fire or if a permitted fire gets out of control, it costs the town a considerable amount of money. The ONLY exception to these rules is when we have 100% snow cover.

Recently I was made aware of a large construction fire near town that violated one of the main rules: You cannot leave a fire unattended period! We will contact the DNR for any questionable fires and they will definitely follow up with the person who started said fires.

I've had people reach out to me about what to do to lower the chance of wildfires on their property. The answer is simple: You take care of your own property to lower the risk to your buildings and acreage by cleaning up brush and dead trees and underbrush. Unfortunately, you have no control over your neighboring properties. So, once again, our fire department appreciates a call when you have your permit and are thinking of starting a fire (715-747-6913 or 715-209-1524). Many fires are called in by the ferry line and it takes a lot of resources to locate and deal with fires, whether they are permitted or not.

Be safe,
Chief Reichkitzer

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