

Fire feature, fireplace, fire pit: What's the difference?

You have a nice patio or terrace and are looking at enhancing your outdoor experience by adding a fire feature, a fire pit, or a fireplace but you are confused as to their differences. The Village does **not** permit open burning outside of an approved container. An approved container is a commercially produced device, such as chimeneas, and includes exterior fireplaces.

Below are the characteristics of a fire feature (permitted by code), a fireplace (permitted by code), and a fire pit (not permitted by code):

Fire Feature (permitted by code)

- Completely above grade
- Cannot burn wood, leaves, grass, or other combustible materials
- Is fueled by a UL listed gas starter with accessible shut off located at the feature
- Can be either commercially produced, i.e. a prefabricated fire table, or custom built for a fire pit 'look'

Fireplace (permitted by code)

- Designed and constructed in accordance with Chapter 10 (Chimneys and Fireplaces) of the 2006 IRC
- Fire is contained within a firebox
- Vented through a chimney
- Can be provided with or without a gas starter and accessible shut off
- Can burn wood

Fire Pit (not permitted by code)

- Either recessed partially below or at grade
- Typically has a 'containment' ring of stones or metal
- Can burn wood, leaves, grass, or other combustible materials
- Open air ventilated, no chimney
- No containment of blowing ashes

Fire features and fireplaces are permitted amenities that can provide the desired ambiance of sitting around a fire and are code compliant. A fire pit is **not** code compliant and would not be permitted.

Setbacks

Typically a fire feature is specifically designed to be the center-point of a patio, or a portion of the patio, encouraging people to sit in the round. As such, the patio and fire feature must hold the required side yard setback and must hold a minimum 10' setback from the rear property line. The required side yard setback is formula driven based upon the lot width and is as follows: Lot width - 50' x 10% + 6'

A fire feature is nice as you can sit in the round, but if you miss the warmth and smell of a real fire you may want to consider an exterior fireplace. Exterior fireplaces are not considered open fires as the products of combustion are emitted through a chimney designed to control air pollution emissions. However, because of the emission of smoke from the chimney, fireplaces must hold the required side yard setback and must also hold the required rear yard setback typical to that of a principal structure. For lots that are located within the R3 and R4 zoning districts the required rear yard setback is 25' from the rear property line. For interior lots in the R1 and R2 zoning districts the required rear yard setback is 50' from the rear property line. For corner lots in the R1 and R2 zoning district the required rear yard setback is formula driven and is as follows: 15% of the lot depth; with a minimum of 25'.

Permit Required

Yes, a permit is required for both a fire feature and fireplace.