



HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

M. S. Montgomery
Fire Marshal

FMO STANDARD 1908, rev.1

WOOD WASTE AND/OR RECYCLING FACILITIES

Wood chip piles have the potential to heat internally and spontaneously combust if not managed correctly. Effective management includes proper storage of raw and finished product; timely processing to reduce the total amount of raw and finished product; and performance-based methods to prevent large fires and monetary loss.

While natural materials such as wood products are usually benign, recent events demonstrate the need for fire monitoring and early detection, and immediate action to prevent fire growth, to protect the health and welfare of citizens and the environment of Harris County.

The Harris County Fire Marshal's Office is authorized to establish fire prevention methods and actions for the outdoor storage of wood chips, tree parts, other vegetative material, and other combustible solid waste and scrap tires. According to rules adopted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), waste and recycling facilities are required to submit a fire suppression plan for review and comment to the local fire prevention authority having jurisdiction. In unincorporated Harris County, this plan must be submitted to the Harris County FMO at 2318 Atascosita, Humble Texas 77396. If you have any questions, please contact the Harris County FMO Inspection Division at 281-436-8000.

At a minimum, your fire prevention plan must include:

- Facility location information, including emergency contact information
- Site map, showing all buildings; major storage, processing, and transfer areas; access roads; and fire protection features
- Procedures to prevent fires, and response plans to control and extinguish fires that do occur

Specifically, all wood waste and/or recycling facilities must be in accordance with the following:

- **Emergency Notification Information** – Signage must be prominently posted on or near the facility's main entrance or business center. The sign must include 24-hour emergency contact information, and the exact address and business name of the facility.
- **Security** – The property must have limited public access to prevent vandalism, arson, and unauthorized access. The property must be fenced with sufficient warning signs to indicate no trespassing.
- **Fire department access** -- Entry gates shall be a minimum of 14 feet in width to accommodate fire apparatus, with sufficient turning radius.
- **Fire Prevention Procedures** – All work areas will be designed to eliminate smoking or open flames within the area. Smoking pads may be designated and approved in the final fire prevention plan. Compliance with no smoking rules rests with the operator/owner. Open flames are prohibited unless fire extinguishment capabilities are on site (i.e. welding/cutting operations require specific fire safety considerations, such as a fire watch, portable fire extinguisher immediately available, and separation of combustible and flammable materials).



- **Fire Extinguishers** -- ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers must be present, properly located, and meet periodic inspection requirements in accordance with NFPA 10. Portable extinguishers must be mounted on all heavy equipment operating in the area. Any structures on site must have a minimum of one extinguisher within the structure.
- **Windrows** – To reduce product loss and fire spread, all raw and finished product piles:
 - Must be a minimum of 100 feet from structures;
 - Must not have weeds and other combustibles within 30 feet of the piles;
 - Must be accessible in all weather conditions by fire apparatus and heavy equipment on all sides;
 - Must be separated by a minimum of 30 feet between piles;
 - Are limited to 2,000 cubic yards, and a maximum length and width of 150 by 30 feet;
 - Must be limited to a maximum height of 15 feet; and
 - Must have a means of reducing pile temperature to prevent any decomposition that may result in fire.
- **Fire Protection Plan** -- Firefighting water supplies and application accessories must be present and accessible, the desired amount and location to be approved by acceptance of the fire prevention plan. Examples of certain firefighting capabilities are listed below:
 - Tank trucks with the capability of distributing firefighting water via hoses and nozzles comparable to municipal fire department operations
 - Fire hydrants within 1,000 feet
 - Pond(s) with apparatus access and/or water distribution system in place
 - Water distribution system capable of delivering at least 60 psi and 250 gpm at all site distribution points
 - Heavy equipment, such as backhoes and bulldozers, should be on site or immediately available to allow for pile content removal and/or separation in the event of a fire situation.
 - Each employee should know the elements of the fire protection plan and their role in an emergency. Any employee may be required to demonstrate this knowledge upon request of the county fire marshal.
 - The local fire department must be an active participant in understanding the risk and available site resources. The local fire department must be provided with the fire prevention plan.