

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Wood Chip Pile Spacing

Learning objective: The student shall be able to explain the maximum permitted dimensions for wood chip piles.

Wood chip storage piles provide a special challenge based on climate conditions, wood species, and pile age. Access to the piles for firefighting operations often is compromised by poor road conditions and large product-handling vehicles. Fire protection water supplies may be limited or nonexistent.

Wood chip piles are susceptible to two different fire types: internal, burrowing fires from spontaneous heating, and surface fires from a wide variety of ignition sources: smoking materials, sparks, equipment, arson, etc.



One strategy for protecting these occupancies is to keep wood chip piles in sizes that are manageable in the event of a fire. Piles should not exceed 60 feet in height, 300 feet in width, and 500 feet in length. NFPA 1 notes that veneer chip piles (from manufactured wood products) should not exceed 50 feet in height.

Piles should be separated from one another by approved fire apparatus access roads.

For additional information, refer to NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code™, Chapter 31; and the International Fire Code®, Chapter 19.