

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

# Coffee Break Training

## Topic: Outdoor Storage Near Property Lines

**Learning objective:** The student shall be able to describe the fire code requirements for combustible storage near property lines.

While most fire control regulations for storage pertain to indoor conditions, there are times when outdoor storage presents a very real fire hazard.

Combustible materials stored in the open and close to property lines may be inviting arson targets, or simply may be a potential exposure problem. One can imagine--or may have experienced--the fire hazards associated with outdoor lumberyards or tire storage, for example.

To minimize these risks, the model fire codes require outdoor storage arrays to be at least 10 feet from property lines. This separation distance may be reduced to 3 feet if storage is not more than 6 feet in height.

Outdoor storage also should be limited to 20 feet in height, regardless of where it occurs in relation to property lines.

When the fire official determines that there is no hazard to adjoining property, the setback distances may be reduced.



The fire official should consider the future implications of that decision, in the event conditions on one or more of the adjoining properties change. For example, the pallet storage permitted in this picture may become a serious exposure hazard if a combustible structure or other combustible storage is placed near the fence. Once the decision has been made to permit storage close to the property line, the owner may invoke the “pre-existing conditions” or so-called “grandfather” clause to resist changing the storage array.

For additional information, refer to NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code*<sup>™</sup>, Chapter 10; or *International Fire Code*<sup>®</sup>, Chapter 3.