

In the tradition of Independence Days past, many families and friends will come together this weekend to celebrate our great Republic. In celebrating, we often get carried away with the joy of the day and forget some of the safety tips we have learned over the years. As you gather this holiday weekend for grilling, bon fires and fireworks take a moment to reflect on all of the fire safety tips that you have learned over the years.

A particularly important safety tip to remember is to respect the fire hydrants in your neighborhood. Be sure when guests arrive that they are aware of the location of fire hydrants and do not park too near them, making them inaccessible to the fire department should they be needed in an emergency. Cars should not be parked any closer than 15 feet in any direction from a fire hydrant.

Another potential hazard is to have plant material growing too near a hydrant. Plant material must be kept away so that the hydrant can be fully operational. This means that there must be enough room from a hydrant wrench to rotate 360 degrees around the hydrant. A three-foot clear space around the circumference of the hydrant is best.

Plant material such as small shrubs or annuals and perennials are permitted near hydrants, but trees and larger shrubs should be avoided, as their roots can damage the water line serving the hydrant. However, all plant material should be maintained such that they hydrant is easily visible to the fire department. If necessary, prune back any plant material obstructing view of the fire hydrant.

In the Charlottesville/Albemarle area all fire hydrants are painted a reflective red so that hydrants are readily visible both day and night. If you notice that the hydrant in your neighborhood is in need of a fresh coat of paint, contact your local water authority. In Albemarle County contact the Albemarle County Service Authority at 977-4511. In the City contact the Public Works Department at 970-3380.

You can assist your local water authority and fire department by being observant of the fire hydrants in your neighborhood. If you notice a hydrant leaking or witness suspicious people connecting to the hydrants contact your local water authority immediately. Anyone withdrawing water from a hydrant must be permitted to do so by a water authority. All permitted haulers must have their vehicles inspected to ensure that they have proper backflow prevention devices to avoid contamination of the water supply. If you notice someone who looks out of the ordinary connecting to a water hydrant contact your local water authority immediately.

With your assistance, our water supplies will remain safe and fire departments will have the tools to fight fires in your neighborhood.

