

FESTIVAL OF THE BONFIRES, INC. AND  
PONTCHARTRAIN LEVEE DISTRICT  
2023 BONFIRE SEASON GUIDELINES

**DUE TO STRICT INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS, THE 2023 BONFIRE SEASON IS FROM NOVEMBER 20-DECEMBER 27, 2023 ONLY**

**NO ONE MAY ACCESS THE LEVEE PRIOR TO MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023!**

**PERMITTED BONFIRE CONSTRUCTION MAY NOT BEGIN UNTIL MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023.**

**NO HOUSEHOLD CONSTRUCTION OR DEMOLITION DEBRIS OR ANY OTHER STORM/EVENT AND/OR ANY DEBRIS OF ANY KIND WILL BE ALLOWED WITHIN ANY PORTION OF THE LEVEE RIGHT OF WAY, INCLUDING THE BONFIRE AREA OR ON TOP OF THE LEVEE.**

**CHRISTMAS EVE BONFIRE FESTIVITIES ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER LEVEE SHALL CONCLUDE BY 11 P.M. BONFIRE PARTICPANTS AND VISITORS WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE LEVEE AT THIS TIME.**

St. James Parish Bonfire Permits will be issued from the St. James Parish Welcome Center, starting Monday, November 20, 2023. (THE FESTIVAL OF THE BONFIRES, INC. ISSUES ALL BONFIRE PERMITS.) Permission must be obtained from all landowners on whose property bonfires are to be constructed.

St. John the Baptist Parish Bonfire Permits will be issued by St. John the Baptist Parish, Department of Public Safety for the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc. starting Monday, November 20, 2023. Permission must be obtained from all landowners on whose property bonfires are to be constructed.

**Failure to comply with the following regulations can result in the permit holder being fined and/or the BONFIRE SITE REVOKED.**

In order to protect the safety and integrity of the main line Mississippi River levees during the Bonfire Season, the following guidelines shall be established, strictly enforced, and adhered to by ALL types of bonfires.

**BONFIRES ARE TO BE LOCATED ON THE LEVEE AGGREGATE CROWN ONLY.**

1. The Pontchartrain Levee District Annual Mississippi River Levee Inspection will be on November 9, 2022.
2. In order to further provide for the integrity of the levee, no excavation in the levee will be tolerated, other than one (1) hole per bonfire, not to exceed eighteen inches (18") for the center pole.
3. Bonfire size limitations for levee protection and public safety are as follows:

\*Note: These size limitations apply to ALL bonfires and ALL permit holders. AGAIN, BONFIRES ARE TO BE PLACED ON THE LEVEE AGGREGATE CROWN ONLY\*

- a) **Maximum Height:** 15 feet, from base of center pole to top of center pole
- b) **“Traditional” Maximum Width and Length:** 12 feet by 12 feet
- c) **“Governmental/Tourist Entity” Maximum Width and Length:** 12 feet width by 24 feet length
- d) All side poles must be securely tied to the center pole using #16 wire or larger.

4. All bonfires are to be constructed on the location designated by the local governing authority, and each bonfire must have a visible numbered sign, with letter(s) and number(s) no smaller than 6" in height, so as to be identified in the event of a violation. This sign shall not be removed until the bonfire has been burned.
5. No huts, buildings, sofas, chairs, or structures of any kind, other than the bonfire itself, will be allowed at any bonfire site. **This includes, but is not limited to, pallets, spools, and any items with nails, screws, or other sharp metals that may hinder regular levee maintenance.**

**NO HOUSEHOLD CONSTRUCTION OR DEMOLITION DEBRIS OR ANY OTHER STORM/EVENT AND/OR ANY DEBRIS OF ANY KIND WILL BE ALLOWED WITHIN ANY PORTION OF THE LEVEE RIGHT OF WAY, INCLUDING THE BONFIRE AREA OR ON TOP OF THE LEVEE.**

6. Tires, creosote timbers, plastics, or any type of hazardous materials, including, but not limited to, homemade or purchased explosives, such as fireworks, roman candles, bottle rockets, sparklers, or any flammable type of explosive of any nature or kind, are prohibited in, on, or around the bonfire area. **Firecrackers must be placed on the exterior of the bonfire structure. Firecrackers are defined as those items that merely pop and do NOT launch, shoot, and/or propel.** Permit holder assumes all liability for use, placement, lighting, and explosion of firecrackers.

**PLD WILL NOT AND DOES NOT AUTHORIZE ANY PERMIT HOLDER(S) TO HAVE A "FIREWORKS SHOW or DISPLAY" OF ANY KIND ON THE FLOOD SIDE (BACKSIDE) OF THE BATTURE. Violation of this directive will result in said permit holder(s) being prohibited from participating in the bonfire season for a minimum of one (1) year.**

7. Diesel fuel shall be the only authorized agent used in the assistance of igniting the bonfire and WILL ONLY BE ALLOWED TO BE APPLIED/SOAKED ONTO THE BONFIRE STRUCTURE DURING THE MORNING OF **DECEMBER 24, 2023**, AND NOT BEFORE THAT DATE.
8. No more than four (4) vehicles will be allowed at each bonfire site during construction of the bonfire. No other vehicles will be allowed at each bonfire site. The use of dirt bikes, three and/or four wheelers, golf carts, and/or any and all other unauthorized motor vehicles are strictly PROHIBITED. THERE ARE TO BE NO OTHER VEHICLES AT THE BONFIRE SITE, EXCEPT THOSE VEHICLES WITH A PERMIT FOR THAT SITE – this means that, if you have a bonfire permit for Bonfire No. G-25, the vehicle MUST be parked behind G-25 and not down the levee/road at another bonfire site. The permit ONLY allows the vehicle to be at that particular bonfire site on the levee. The permits are not intended to allow for traveling up and down River Road, via the levee system. The permits are issued to reduce the amount of traffic and to contain the area of travel on the levee system. **\*This may be revoked in the event of Flood Fight, excessive rain events, unusual high water and/or state declared emergency conditions, including but not limited to any and all health emergency(ies) during the permitted bonfire activities as deemed appropriate by the Levee District, Board of Commissioners, in coordination with the Festival of the Bonfires.**

Once construction is complete, those vehicle permits shall be void. Unauthorized vehicles are prohibited, violators will be ticketed, and the vehicle permit will be revoked. ALL vehicle permits shall expire on **DECEMBER 24, 2023**, AT 12 NOON; this regulation will be **strictly enforced**. At 12 NOON on **DECEMBER 24, 2023**, ALL unauthorized vehicles are to be off of the levee and removed from the bonfire site. **Note: Again, this may be revoked in the event of Flood Fight, excessive rain events, unusual high water and/or state declared emergency conditions, including but not limited to any and all health emergency(ies) during the permitted bonfire activities as deemed appropriate by the Levee District, Board of Commissioners, in coordination with the Festival of the Bonfires.**

9. **NO PARKING OR RIDING ON THE FRONT, GRASSY LEVEE SLOPE** by any vehicles. The use of dirt bikes, three and/or four wheelers, golf carts, and/or any and all other unauthorized motor vehicles are strictly PROHIBITED. Only vehicles with bonfire permits are to use dedicated ramps for entrance to the site and to utilize the backside concrete slope for access to the top of the levee. **This regulation will be strictly enforced.**

**THERE IS TO BE NO PARKING ON THE CONCRETE SLOPE, AND VEHICLES MUST PARK ON THE BACKSIDE TOE (BOTTOM) OF THE LEVEE, DIRECTLY BEHIND THE BONFIRE SITE FOR WHICH THE PERMIT IS ISSUED.** (See No. 8 above).

Permit holders are to drive up to the bonfire site, unload materials, and drive down the backside of the levee, and park at the bottom toe of the levee, within the 40' right-of-way. **DO NOT PARK AND/OR UNLOAD ON THE CONCRETE SLOPE PAVEMENT AT ANY TIME.**

10. The deadline for the completion of construction of the bonfires will be **December 24, 2023, at 12 noon.**
11. Local Law Enforcement Agencies and/or the Pontchartrain Levee District and/or the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc., shall have the authority to enforce permit regulations and/or to prosecute violations. Video cameras may be utilized to record these violations.
12. In the event of Flood Fight, excessive rain events, unusual high water and/or **state declared emergency conditions, including but not limited to any and all health emergency(ies) during the permitted bonfire activities, the Levee District, Board of Commissioners, in coordination with the Festival of the Bonfires and all of the local governmental officials,** will take appropriate action to delay, postpone, or cancel all or part of the bonfire activities and may require removal of all bonfire materials within 48 hours of the official notice.
13. Should the Christmas Eve lighting of bonfires be canceled for any reason, Festival of the Bonfires, Inc., permit holders will be provided with instructions concerning the date and time for the rescheduling of the lighting, **SHOULD THAT BE AN OPTION. In no case will the lighting of the bonfires be extended beyond December 27, 2023 due to strict insurance requirements.**
14. No permits will be issued to any persons under the age of 18. The permit holder must be an adult and assumes full responsibility to comply with these regulations. **“Assuming full responsibility” on behalf of the permit holder causes permit holder to be responsible for the actions of ALL i.e. take upon himself/herself the obligation to be held accountable for act(s) done by others.** No permits will be issued **after December 10, 2023.**
15. BONFIRES WILL BE LIT UPON DETERMINATION OF FAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS, IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL SHERIFF AND EOC DIRECTOR OF THAT PARISH. AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE VIA THE APPROPRIATE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION FOR THAT PARISH. NOTE: Under no condition will permission be granted to ignite the bonfires if the winds are blowing from a direction that would create a fire hazard to any buildings or homes, among other things.
16. **No bonfires will be lit before 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.**
17. Each local governing authority (Town of Litcher, Town of Gramercy, St. James Parish, and Festival of the Bonfires, Inc.) may permit only one bonfire to be constructed as a tourist attraction. This permission will be granted to a government-sponsored and/or non-profit organization only, and like the other bonfire sites, it must adhere to the bonfire size limitations, as set forth in No. 3 of these guidelines, and all other guidelines herein.
18. The transfer of a bonfire permit from the original permit holder is strictly prohibited.
19. No loud music or other noise will be allowed on or near the bonfire sites during the construction period.
20. No working on the bonfires after dark, and everyone shall be off of the levee at 8:00 p.m., except on **December 8, 9, 10, 2023 and then from December 15 through December 23, 2023,** when everyone must be off of the levee by 11:00 p.m. (customary curfew time).
21. By virtue of paying the permit fee to Festival of the Bonfires, Inc., permit holders and all participants listed on said permit automatically become members (non-voting) of the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc. All members of the association will be insured for liability, subject to the policy conditions.

22. **It is the responsibility of the permit holder to clean his/her bonfire area.** Any and all large logs and other trash, bottles, bridges, etc. are NOT the responsibility of the levee district to dispose of and/or to clean up the site. **PERIODIC INSPECTIONS OF THE BONFIRE SITES IN THE PARISHES WILL BE CONDUCTED BY THE FOB, PLD LEVEE MAINTENANCE SUPERINTENDENT AND/OR LOCAL/PLD LAW ENFORCEMENT TO SURVEY CLEAN UP FOR COMPLIANCE. THOSE SITES FOUND IN VIOLATION MAY BE SUBJECT TO A CITATION ISSUED TO SAID PERMIT HOLDER(S).**

Cleanup shall consist of cutting and stacking bonfire logs greater than four feet (4') in length, as well as, picking up and disposing of any trash (cans, paper, firework materials, homemade 'bridges,' etc.) from around his/her permitted area. **The permit holder must clean up said bonfire area by the opening of business on Tuesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.**

23. Should the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc., receive any substantiated complaints against a bonfire location, the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc., reserves the right to refuse to grant any future permits to any and all members of that bonfire location.
24. If any attorney fees or costs are incurred in the enforcement of these guidelines, the Pontchartrain Levee District shall be reimbursed by the violator for the incurred costs.
25. **No racial, inflammatory, political, or derogatory symbols, emblems, and/or statements will be allowed on or around any permitted Bonfire structure or in/on the protected area of the Mississippi River Levee. THE ONLY FLAG ALLOWED WILL BE THE AMERICAN FLAG (THE 50 STARS AND 13 STRIPES, RED/WHITE & BLUE). Any and all complaints will be promptly investigated, and appropriate actions taken immediately, including loss of Permit and removal of the bonfire structure. Any question as to the interpretation of this statement will be determined by the Festival of the Bonfires, Inc.**
26. **During the 2023 Bonfire Season (November 20, 2023 through December 27, 2023 any incident, issue, injury and/or accident of any kind occurring at a permitted bonfire site is to be reported immediately to the Festival of Bonfires representative Jason Amato at 225-268-6902, who will work in cooperation with the St. James Parish Sheriff's Office, Pontchartrain Levee District Police, Towns of Lucher and Gramercy Police Departments and St. John Parish Sheriff's Office in providing the appropriate response.**