



## **CAPITAL CITY FIRE/RESCUE**

820 Glacier Avenue, Juneau, Alaska 99801 Ph (907)586-5322 Fax: (907) 586-8323

# Fire Hydrant Clearance in the Capital City

Fire hydrants are designed to provide water for fire suppression purposes. Fire hydrants in Juneau are installed and maintained by the CBJ Public Works Department. Fire hydrants are supplied by large water mains that are piped underground throughout most residential and commercial neighborhoods of the City and Borough of Juneau. They are strategically placed to provide the best water protection available and having a good water system allows Juneau to have a better ISO rating. ISO inspectors also review the accessibility, condition and maintenance of fire hydrants. The better the ISO rating, the better insurance rates that are available to homeowners.

Within the fire code are certain prescriptive requirements that are to be enforced by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

Fire hydrants are only effective if we can find them and fully operate them. There should be no obstructions in front of the hydrant to the street and no obstructions within 3' feet of hydrant. Because of the large equipment and hoses we must connect to the hydrant, this required distance is necessary to operate the hydrant safely. No obstructions such as shrubs, plants or fences should be in front of the hydrant. Obstructions such as these make it difficult to find a hydrant quickly.

These clearances prevent delays in finding and using fire hydrants and fire protection equipment.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Hydrants:

### **Q: Why is it important not to have obstructions around fire hydrants?**

**A:** When responding to a fire situation, our fire apparatus carry a limited supply of water. We rely on strategically located fire hydrants to supply us with the water we need to help with extinguishing a fire. To do our job more efficiently, we must be able to locate these fire hydrants quickly. Therefore, they must be clearly visible to us and unobstructed by vehicles, fences, or vegetation. The laws in our jurisdiction recognize this and address the issue.

### **Q: Can I paint the fire hydrant in front of my house?**

**A:** No. Fire hydrants are yellow, with sometimes additional colors that have a significance to firefighters. The hydrants are yellow so as to be easily seen, and readily recognized by the fire department as being active.

**Q: Why does the Public Works or Fire Department tell me to move my fence or bushes around fire hydrant?**

**A:** Once a year, the city does fire hydrant maintenance, clearing the hydrants of brush, and inspecting all the hydrants for code compliance. The City and Borough of Juneau requires by fire code that all hydrants be clear of obstacles inhibiting their use, and that they remain visible on approach from the roadway, regardless of direction of travel. Basically, the hydrant;

- must not have anything higher than ground cover placed between it and the road,
- nothing higher than 6" of ground cover within three to five feet of the hydrant,
- Clearance around fire hydrants must have 3ft around the sides of hydrant and nothing blocking the hydrant from view and the hydrant must be visible to vehicle traffic in either direction.

If you receive a notice that you have a fence, plant or other obstructing item, you must take corrective action.

**Q: The fire hydrant in front of my house is ugly and I want to hide it, can I?**

**A:** The short answer, no. Hiding a hydrant could be considered a violation. Simply putting up some kind of natural (plant) or artificial (fence) screening between your residence and the hydrant may be OK, as long as it maintains an adequate working radius around the hydrant, and does not block its view from the roadway and approaches. If you wish to do some landscaping, wall building, or fence construction near a hydrant, please contact the Public Works or the Fire Marshal's Office to see if it meets the proper clearance required. This could avert additional costs and concerns.

**Q: What can I do as a resident of the Capital City to help?**

**A:** You can help yourself, your neighbors, and your local firefighters by simply keeping an eye on the hydrant, trimming back/down any growth nearby, notifying the water department of any damage or maintenance issues, and ensuring that adequate clearances and proper visibility are maintained. If a hydrant cannot be found, it cannot be used. In winter time, keeping a hydrant clear of snow can be a tremendous help to firefighters in case of responding to a fire. Snow piled up around a hydrant can act like an obstruction and cause a delay in response. Please help us make them easy to find.