

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Johnson Officials Provide Update on Industrial Wood Chip Pile Fire

JOHNSON, VT (October 20, 2026) – The Village of Johnson and the Johnson Fire Department continue to actively manage an ongoing fire involving a large industrial wood chip pile located near the intersection of Vermont Route 15 and Hogback Road. The fire is believed to have originated through spontaneous combustion within the approximately 200,000-cubic-foot pile of organic material.

Firefighters have been engaged in suppression operations since the incident was discovered and have applied more than 50,000 gallons of water to the site. Due to the nature of deep-seated fires within large wood chip piles, extinguishment efforts require a combination of water application and mechanical excavation. Heavy equipment is being used to break apart and turn the pile, allowing firefighters to reach and cool hidden hot spots buried deep within the material.

As crews continue this work, residents should expect periods of increased visible smoke and smoke odor. These conditions are most noticeable when buried material is exposed during excavation activities and when weather conditions, including shifting winds and morning atmospheric inversions, affect smoke movement. Residents living downwind or those with respiratory sensitivities are encouraged to keep windows and doors closed and operate ventilation systems on recirculation mode when smoke is present.

Officials want the public to know that there is currently no threat to adjacent structures or surrounding properties. Fire personnel are maintaining a continuous presence at the site and will continue suppression and overhaul operations until the fire is fully extinguished.

Village Manager Erik Bailey stated:

"We appreciate the patience and understanding of our residents and businesses as this complex operation continues. The Johnson Fire Department and our partner agencies are working diligently to ensure the fire is safely extinguished while minimizing impacts to the community."

Johnson Fire Chief Arjay West added:

"These types of fires can be challenging because they often burn deep beneath the surface. The combination of water application and excavation is the most effective way to eliminate hidden hot spots and prevent rekindling."

Johnson Deputy Fire Marshal Corey Davis noted:

"While smoke conditions may fluctuate throughout the operation, our crews are closely monitoring the site. Public safety remains our highest priority, and we will continue to provide updates as conditions change."

The Johnson Fire Department will continue to monitor conditions and provide additional information as necessary.

Media Contact

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