



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Virginia Department of Forestry Prepares for Fall Wildfire Season

Dry conditions are cause for concern

(Charlottesville, VA) The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and federal partners within the state are preparing for what could be a severe fall wildfire season across Virginia. The fire danger is increasing each day the state goes without a widespread, significant rain. Some isolated areas that have been getting showers are not as critical, but most of Virginia has not been so fortunate.

"This is one of the driest falls we've seen in Virginia during the past 20 years," said State Forester Rob Farrell. "The potential for an increased number of fires and more complex fires is significant."

According to Phil Manuel, a meteorologist with the Blacksburg National Weather Service, many areas have gone more than 25 days without significant rainfall. That, combined with the lower humidity levels that are typical this time of year, increase the risk of wildfires. "The short term forecast (6-10 days) indicates a continuation of this dry spell and the long-range through the end of October does not look much better," he added. This time of the year there is always the possibility of a tropical storm to bring rain to Virginia, but so far there are none on the horizon.

Virginia's fall wildfire season typically runs from October 15 until the end of November or early December. It has been several years since the traditional fall wildfire season has begun facing such dry conditions.

As of October 7, more than 24 localities in Virginia have enacted a county-wide ban on all outdoor burning. These localities are mainly located in southwest Virginia, and this number will likely increase over the next several days as the drought continues. "We support each county's decision to take the proactive step of establishing burn bans," said VDOF Director of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller. "Placing restrictions on burning is not a task easily taken by the county government, but if this prevents a single wildfire from occurring, it will be worth it. One never knows if that one fire prevented could have also saved a life."

(more)

(Fire 2)

The VDOF asks all citizens, especially those who live in counties with a burn ban in place, to obey all local restrictions and postpone any burning until we get a significant rainfall event and the burn bans are removed. If you live in any area that does not have any restrictions on burning, please, be extra careful.

- Don't burn on windy days
- keep your burn piles small,
- have water and tools nearby,
- Never leave your fire unattended.
- If you are burning and your fire escapes, call 911 immediately.

“How this season turns out remains to be seen,” said Farrell, “But the potential for a severe fire season is very real. VDOF personnel have ramped up preparedness and we urge the public to do their part to help reduce the number and severity of fires this fall.”

For more information please contact Fred Turck (fred.turck@dof.virginia.gov) with the Virginia Department of Forestry. Office: 434-220-8052 Cell: 757-334-2695.



Wildfires Know No Boundaries



Visit the sites noted below for more information



<https://virginiapublic.firesponse.com/>

<https://vdof.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=616ec339e6ef42629ce19e10f8aad29>

<http://dof.virginia.gov/fire/sit-rep.htm>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/gwj/>

https://www.nps.gov/shen/learn/nature/fire_management.htm

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_dismal_swamp/

<https://www.weather.gov/fire/>

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The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 Billion annually.

Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it's been doing now for more than 100 years. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.