



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March is Wildfire Prevention Month

The Mississippi Forestry Commission announces, by proclamation signed by Governor Barbour, that March is wildfire prevention month in Mississippi.

Historically, more wildfires occur in March than any other month in Mississippi. This is due to the combination of dry leaves, grass and other vegetation; strong, gusty winds; and the increased level of outdoor activity as many property owners begin clean-up projects on their farms and woodlands. Carelessness with debris burning is a leading cause of wildfire in Mississippi.

The average number of wildfires in Mississippi is 3,391 fires that burn 58,730 acres. Thirty percent of the fires and 44 percent of the acres occur in the month of March. Wildfires burn more than trees—houses, out buildings, farm and outdoor recreational equipment, vehicles, and even lives are sometimes lost.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission asks that you don't burn outdoor debris on windy days. Check with local officials and the Forestry Commission for burn ban information. The Forestry Commission lists counties with active bans against open outdoor burning on its Web site at www.mfc.state.ms.us.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission encourages residents to protect their home from the destructive forces of wildfire. Homeowners can become "firewise" by following these fire safety tips:

- Clear flammable vegetation up to 30 feet away from your house.
- Eliminate "ladder" fuels by mowing tall grass, trimming shrubs, and pruning lower tree branches. Ladder fuels allow a ground fire to climb up.
- Keep the lawn watered and mowed short (3 inches or less) on all sides of all buildings.
- Clean the roof, gutters, and windowsills of leaves, needles, and other debris.

For more information on wildfire safety tips and other fire prevention ideas, visit the Forestry Commission's Web site at www.mfc.state.ms.us.

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