



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mississippians Need To Be Aware Of Wildfire Threat, Statewide Burn Ban.

Pearl – The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency along with the Mississippi Forestry Commission and Commissioner of Insurance/State Fire Marshal are asking the public to be aware of the wildfire threat and burn ban that has been issued for the entire state today by Governor Haley Barbour. The burn ban will remain in effect as long as the dry conditions persist. The burn ban prohibits all outdoor burning activities.

The state has experienced little to no rainfall and unseasonably high temperatures during September and early October. This has led to some areas of the state to reach record breaking drought conditions. According to the National Weather Service there is no chance of precipitation in the forecast until early next week. These conditions, combined with the high winds and low relative humidity, create an increased risk for devastating wildfires.

“MEMA is in close contact with all of our county emergency management directors and we are prepared to help provide any resources that they may need in the event of fires,” said MEMA Director Mike Womack.

“The Mississippi Forestry Commission is working closely with the state’s other fire agencies to help keep Mississippi’s people and natural resources safe. We have placed all personnel on call to help facilitate rapid deployment to wildfires, and ask the people of Mississippi to be extremely cautious when enjoying the outdoors and to respect the Governor’s burn ban,” said State Forester Charlie Morgan.

"The greatest risk for these fire conditions is in the rural parts of the state. Mississippi is protected by more than 16,000 fire fighters statewide. These fire fighters have the skills and training and stand ready to support the Mississippi Forestry Commission in protecting lives and property from fire. Through the end of September of this year Mississippi's fire fighters have responded to almost 7,000 reported vegetation fires throughout the state. They strongly support this burn ban and urge all Mississippians to obey the ban and stop all burning until this crisis is passed," State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said.

To help protect yourself, your family, and your home, you can be proactive in wildfire prevention by practicing the steps below.

Learn and teach safe fire practices:

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- Always have a way to extinguish the fire quickly and completely.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and near sleeping areas.
- Never leave a fire, even a cigarette, burning unattended.

Always be ready for an emergency evacuation.

Evacuation may be the only way to protect your family in a wildfire. Know where to go and what to bring with you. You should plan several escape routes in case roads are blocked by a wildfire.

Create Safety Zones Around Your Home.

All vegetation is fuel for a wildfire, though some trees and shrubs are more flammable than others. To reduce the risk, you will need to modify or eliminate brush, trees and other vegetation near your home. The greater the distance is between your home and the vegetation, the greater the protection.

Create a 30-foot safety zone around the house.

Keep the volume of vegetation in this zone to a minimum. If you live on a hill, extend the zone on the downhill side. Fire spreads rapidly uphill. The steeper the slope, the more open space you will need to protect your home. In this zone, you should also do the following:

- Remove vines from the walls of the house.
- Move shrubs and other landscaping away from the sides of the house.
- Remove tree limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
- Replace vegetation that has living or dead branches from the ground-level up, these act as ladder fuels for the approaching fire.
- Cut the lawn often keeping the grass at a maximum of two inches. Watch grass and other vegetation near the driveway, a source of ignition from automobile exhaust systems.
- Clear the area of leaves, brush, evergreen cones, dead limbs and fallen trees.

Clear all combustibles within 30 feet of any structure.

- Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.
- Avoid using bark and wood chip mulch
- Stack firewood 100 feet away and uphill from any structure.
- Store combustible or flammable materials in approved safety containers and keep them away from the house.
- Keep the gas grill and propane tank at least 15 feet from any structure. Clear an area 15 feet around the grill. Always use the grill cautiously but refrain from using it all during high risk times.

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