



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Spring Forest Fire Hazard Season Begins *Outdoor Burning Restrictions Take Effect Feb. 15*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 16, 2011) – Kentucky law designates Feb. 15 through April 30 as spring forest fire hazard season. During this time, it is illegal to burn anything within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland between the daylight hours of **6 a.m. and 6 p.m.** The law is intended to prevent forest fires by allowing outdoor burning only after 6 p.m. when conditions are less likely to cause a wildfire to spread.

“Wildfire is an extremely dangerous situation that doesn’t have to happen,” said Leah MacSwords, director of the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF). “Kentuckians have lived with wildfires for so long that people think they are a natural occurrence, but nothing can be further from the truth. Deliberate or careless acts by people lead to wildfires with the largest two causes by far being arson and burning of trash and debris.”

Each year wildfires needlessly threaten thousands of lives and destroy homes and structures. Last year, more than 54,000 acres burned in Kentucky. In 2010 wildfires also destroyed nine houses and 31 structures in the state. On the positive side, KDF firefighters were able to save nearly 1,000 homes and structures worth over \$69 million while fighting wildfires.

KDF recommends the following precautions to help prevent wildfires:

- Be aware of all outdoor burning restrictions, including forest fire hazard seasons, air pollution regulations, restrictions imposed by local ordinances and county burn bans.

- Avoid burning debris during fire hazard seasons and during times of dry, windy conditions. Outdoor burning is illegal between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland during forest fire hazard seasons.
- Completely extinguish all campfires and debris piles. Never leave a fire unattended and always extinguish fires if conditions become too windy. The smallest spark can lead to a dangerous wildfire.
- Properly extinguish smoking materials. Put out cigarettes, cigars, or pipes only in cleared areas free of vegetation or debris.
- Avoid parking cars, trucks or recreational vehicles on dry vegetation. The exhaust system on a vehicle can reach a temperature of more than 1,000 degrees, which is hot enough to start a wildfire during our current dry season.
- Incorporate 'Firewise' practices around homes and communities in forested areas. Firewise practices range from creating a defensible space around homes by removing leaves, debris and firewood and ensuring access for fire response personnel and equipment in rural or isolated areas.
- Report suspicious acts of arson to the nearest Kentucky State Police post or call the Target Arson Hotline at 1-800-27-ARSON.

For more information about how you can prevent wildfires, contact the Kentucky Division of Forestry at 1-800-866-0555 or visit the division's website at <http://forestry.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

Editor's note: *The mission of the Kentucky Division of Forestry is to protect and enhance the forest resources of the Commonwealth. The agency is responsible for preventing and suppressing wildfires on state and private lands as well as providing assistance to landowners and communities for the purpose of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of our forests to meet the needs of present and future generations.*

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