



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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### **Fall Forest Fire Hazard Season Ends Dec. 15** *Forestry Officials Remain Concerned About Potential for Wildfire*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (Dec. 14, 2010) – Fall forest fire hazard season officially ends Dec. 15, but officials with the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) continue to urge caution when conducting any kind of outdoor burning.

“Although recent precipitation has decreased the number of forest fires in the last two weeks, it only takes a few warm, dry days to create conditions favorable for fires,” said Leah MacSwords, director of the Division of Forestry.

Since Jan. 1, 2010, KDF has suppressed 1,823 wildland fires that have burned 55,647 acres across the state. While arson continues to be the leading cause of wildfires in Kentucky, the western and central regions of the state showed an overall increase in fire as a result of drought conditions. Forestry officials reported the following numbers as causes for this year’s wildfires: 1,095 arson fires, 446 debris fires, and 147 fires due to lightning, faulty equipment and other causes. Officials also noted that fire suppression was more difficult this year due to the accumulation of dead trees and limbs from storm damage in recent years.

To reduce the risks of wildfire, forestry officials recommend that citizens be aware of fire hazard seasons, outdoor burning laws, campfire safety and precautions to take while burning woody debris. The following guidelines provided by the Kentucky Division of Forestry summarize the specifics of forest fire season:

- Fire hazard seasons are enforced by KDF and occur in the fall from Oct. 1 to Dec. 15 and in the spring from Feb. 15 to April 30. During these times, outdoor burning is illegal from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in or within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland.
- In addition to fire hazard seasons, outdoor burning laws and restrictions such as air pollution regulations and county burn bans may also apply. Citizens should contact the Kentucky Division for Air Quality for air pollution regulations and the local judge-executive's office for possible county burn bans.
- Safety precautions should always be taken into consideration when burning woody debris or using campfires. Weather conditions are a contributing factor in the number and intensity of wildfires, therefore outdoor burning should only occur when the wind is calm and humidity is high. Other precautions include keeping brush piles and campfires small and contained, keeping a supply of water and a shovel accessible, and staying with the fire until it is completely extinguished.
- Forest arson – the leading cause of wildfire in Kentucky – is a felony under state law (KRS 149.380) and is punishable by up to five years in prison and/or up to \$10,000 in fines. Suspicious individuals should be reported to KDF, local law enforcement officers or the Kentucky State Police. Citizens may also call the Target Arson Hotline at 1-800-27-ARSON.

For more information about fire hazard seasons, outdoor burning laws and safe burning practices, contact the Kentucky Division of Forestry at 1-800-866-0555 or visit the division's website at <http://forestry.ky.gov>.

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