



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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When on the scene of a wildfire, the Arkansas Forestry Commission recommends reporters and photographers wear appropriate fire safe clothing. They are: high top, lace up, leather boots (8-inch preferred); Fire retardant full length trousers – Nomex or other specialty clothing preferred – 100% cotton or linen is acceptable; Fire retardant long sleeve shirt or blouse with a closeable neckline – Nomex or other specialty clothing preferred – 100 % cotton or linen is acceptable

AFC Battles Wildfires Across the State

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. – Arkansas Forestry Commission crews have suppressed 14 fires that have burned a total of 115 acres since 4 p.m. Wednesday.

AFC encourages Arkansans to avoid burning due to the extremely warm temperatures. Heat indices more than 100 degrees create a dangerous situation for emergency personnel responding to fires.

County Judges have issued burn bans in Ashley, Chicot, Columbia, Conway, Fulton, Garland, Hot Spring, Howard, Jefferson, Johnson, Lafayette, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Polk, Pope, Prairie, Pulaski, Searcy, Sharp, Van Buren and White Counties. The wildfire danger is moderate to high for the entire state.

Arkansas residents living in forested areas should begin taking measures to protect their homes from wildfire. Even the smallest steps taken can lead to a huge advantage in ensuring your home will remain standing.

“With the onset of fire season it is an excellent time to review the Firewise status of your home and property,” Matthew Simpson, Arkansas FireWise Coordinator, said. “Remember to maintain a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space and keep things ‘lean, clean and green.’ Homes do not have to burn due to a wildfire. A little Firewise prevention work can go a long way.”

With a high fire danger risk, there are a few things to remember:

- Burning is strongly discouraged. This is especially true on days where humidity levels have dropped below 30 percent and winds are gusty. Fires can spread quickly in these conditions.
- Be mindful that sparks from lawn mowers and hay baling equipment can start a wildfire.
- Never discard cigarettes from vehicles.
- Never park vehicles where grass or other vegetation can touch the exhaust system.

AFC recommends homeowners create a 30 to 100 foot (depending on the terrain) “defensible space” around their house. Defensible space is an area around a structure that provides an opportunity to modify the existing vegetation to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire.

Homeowners should thin flammable trees, such as pine, near their home and remove undergrowth that can serve as a link for grass fire to reach treetops. Also, be sure to remove dead leaves and pine needles from roofs, gutters and along the base of your home.

Other suggestions include:

- Keep trees and shrubs pruned. Prune all trees from six to 10 feet above the ground.
- Remove overhanging branches from your roof.
- Mow your yard regularly.
- Store firewood away from the house.
- Dispose of cutting and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Homeowners should use 1/8-inch screen to cover open areas underneath decks. This prevents embers from igniting vegetation beneath the deck, which can in turn ignite the structure.

For more tips on Firewise landscaping and construction, visit www.arkansasfirewise.com. To view current burn bans and wildfire danger ratings, visit www.arkansasforestry.org. To report a wildfire, call the Arkansas Forestry Commission Dispatch Center at 1-800-468-8834, or 911.

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The Arkansas Forestry Commission offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Arkansas FireWise is a program of the Arkansas Forestry Commission, that works closely with Firewise Communities/USA. Firewise Communities/USA is a part of the National Firewise Communities Program, an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program includes Firewise Communities workshops, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. The National Firewise Communities Program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, state forestry organizations, the US Fire Administration, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.