



News Release

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NORTHWEST GEORGIA AT INCREASED RISK OF WILDFIRE

Northwest Georgia residents are being urged to use extreme caution with outdoor fires because of a recent increase in wildfire activity and a growing potential for wildfire risk. According to the Georgia Forestry Commission, local dry conditions have made the fires more difficult to control, and in some cases required extended operations to contain.

"The weather forecast indicates these dry conditions may persist," said Frank Sorrells, Chief of Forest Protection for the Georgia Forestry Commission. "We're asking everyone to be very careful with any outdoor burning, including campfires, cooking fires, and the disposal of hot coals or ashes. Some of the counties affected are already under the annual EPD summer burn ban, and the GFC will be evaluating counties outside the ban daily to determine if burn permits can be issued due to the increasing fire danger," Sorrells said.

The high fire risk area encompasses communities from generally the Metro Atlanta area to the Alabama and Tennessee borders, and east to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Georgia Forestry Commission has responded to numerous fires in northwest Georgia over the last two weeks. Several required extended operations and additional staffing to control and keep them contained. In Polk and Whitfield Counties, two fires have burned more than 50 acres each, and continue to be monitored for flare-ups and breakouts. Wildfires that start and spread in rough and steep terrain are especially difficult and require additional resources.

"Warm temperatures bring lots of people outdoors," said Sorrells. "Safety is our top priority, so we need everyone's assistance in using fire judiciously when it is allowed." Sorrells said escaped burning is the number one cause of wildfire in Georgia, and lit cigarettes, matches and sparks are capable of igniting a blaze when air temperatures are at their highest and relative humidity is low.

Escaped fires and suspected wildfires should be reported immediately to the nearest emergency response agency by calling 911 or the local Georgia Forestry Commission office.

For more information about wildfires in your area, fire safety and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission call your local GFC office or visit GaTrees.org.

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