



News Release

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DRY HOLIDAY WEATHER RAISES FIRE CONCERNS

Dry weather conditions and the upcoming July 4th holiday are prompting warnings about the possibility of wildfire in Georgia. The Georgia Forestry Commission is encouraging everyone to use extra caution when enjoying campfires, fireworks, or any type of outdoor burning.

"Above normal dry conditions have persisted over most of the state for several weeks," said Frank Sorrells, Chief of Protection for the Georgia Forestry Commission. "Under these types of conditions, where grasses and natural vegetation found in the forest are dry and lack moisture, any type of ignition source can cause a wildfire."

The Independence Day holiday brings many people out to enjoy Georgia's 24 million acres of forestland, which means the chances for escaped fire can escalate. On average, the state loses approximately 46,000 acres to wildfires annually.

Any type of open burning requires a burn permit, available at gatrees.org or by contacting a local GFC office. Open burning is prohibited in the Environmental Protection Division's summer burn ban region until September 30, though campfires, recreational, and cooking fires are exempt from burn permit requirements in all areas. Outdoor burning should be avoided during air quality alerts or warnings, and citizens are urged to be aware of local fire ordinances.

Sorrells said a few precautions can help prevent the risk of open fire getting out of hand. Grass, leaves, limbs and other flammable material should be cleared from the area to be used for a campfire or open burning, and a shovel or rake and water should be within easy reach.



"Anyone using fireworks should follow those guidelines as well," said Sorrells, "and remember that burning embers can spark a wildfire wherever they land."

Making sure campfires are completely extinguished is critical, too, Sorrells said. That means using water to cool the ashes and coals, stirring them, and applying more water to ensure it is dead out before leaving.

"The fourth of July brings all of us together for an important celebration," Sorrells said. "With extra awareness and caution, we can ensure it's a safe holiday as well."

For more information about safe burning and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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