



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Press Release

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Fall Forest Fire Hazard Season Began Sunday

Seasonal Restrictions on Outdoor Burning Are Back In Effect

Frankfort, Ky. (October 2, 2017) – The Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) is again preparing for an active wildfire season. Each year, there are nearly 1,500 wildfires in the state of Kentucky, based on a 10-year average.

Last fall, the division responded to 520 fires that burned 52,216 acres with a timber value loss of \$20,642,663. The majority of the fires occurred in November.

Wildfires in Kentucky cause damage to homes, private property, trees and landscapes. More importantly, lives are placed at risk. Not only the lives of people where the wildfires occur but also the lives of the firefighters.

Most of Kentucky's wildfires are preventable. They are the result of human activity - arson and careless open-burning (burning of trash, debris and brush). If people start wildfires, people can prevent them.

Division Director James Wright said the most widely available fuel for wildfires in Kentucky is hardwood leaf litter. "Unlike western fires that burn on the ground and in the canopy,

Kentucky's fires usually stay on the forest floor and burn only what is already down," Wright said. "Beginning in October, fresh new dead leaf litter begins to fall in the forest."

It is against the law to do any open burning within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland between the daylight hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. during the fall and spring forest fire hazard seasons, which run from October 1 to December 15 and from February 15 to April 30 respectively.

Compounding the risk, during the October to December fire hazard season Kentucky typically sees lower relative humidity (RH) numbers than in summer and winds become erratic due to the seasonal change. Because the humidity rises during the day and winds fall, restricting burning until after 6 p.m. during the fall and spring reduces the chances of outdoor fires escaping.

Arson is a felony offense. Last fire season, 70 people were given citations for illegal burning and 14 were arrested and charged with setting fires in the Commonwealth. The division will again be working with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) who will be assisting with law enforcement. This partnership adds extra eyes in and around the woods. All Kentuckians can help by reporting a wildland fire or an arsonist to their local law enforcement office.

Residents should call the Division of Air Quality at 1-502-782-6592 to learn about other specific regulations before burning anything.

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