



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Outdoor Fires Unlawful Before 4 p.m.

The Commonwealth's 4 p.m. Burn Law goes into effect February 15. This law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. each day between February 15 and April 30 if the fire is in, or within 300 feet of, woodland, brush or fields containing dry grass or other flammable materials.

"The 4 p.m. Burn Law is one of the most effective tools we have in the prevention of wildfires," said John Miller, director of fire and emergency response at the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof). "In late winter and early spring, downed trees, branches and leaves become 'forest fuel' that increase the danger of a forest fire. By adhering to the law and not burning before 4 p.m., people are less likely to start a fire that threatens them, their property and the forests of Virginia."

The 4 p.m. time frame is based on environmental factors; after 4 p.m., the winds are likely to be calmer, the temperature decreases and the humidity increases, all of which contribute to safer burning conditions.

Regardless of the time of day, it's critical to exercise sound judgment when burning at any time of year. Even if it is legal to burn, it might not be wise to do so. This is especially true if it has not rained in several days, the winds are high or if you don't have the tools and equipment to contain or control your fire.

"The leading cause of forest fires in Virginia is carelessness. An unattended fire, a trailer chain dragging on the asphalt or a single match can ignite the dry fuels that are so prevalent in the early spring. Add a few days of dry, windy conditions and an escaped wildfire can quickly turn into a raging blaze," said Mr. Miller.

For more information on what you can do to protect yourself and your property, how to become “firewise” or to get a complete copy of the Forest Fire Laws, contact your local VDOF office or visit to <http://dof.virginia.gov/laws/index.htm#FireLaws>

To take a quote from Smokey Bear, “Only You Can Prevent Wildfires.”

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The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 Billion annually.

Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it’s been doing now for more than 100 years. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.