



For Immediate Release

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## The Fall Fire Season is Here

The 2021 Fire Season is upon us, and the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) is urging Virginians to learn about Wildfire Prevention and to take precautions if they are planning to burn debris this fall.

Our top priority as listed in the VDOF Strategic Plan is to protect the forest resources and the citizens of the Commonwealth from wildfire and reduce impacts to the forest from other threats.

In order to do this, VDOF relies on collaboration of all fire departments, other land management agencies and the cooperation of all Virginians and visitors to the Commonwealth.

“The local volunteer and paid fire departments all across Virginia are critical in our success,” John Miller, Director of Fire and Emergency Response for VDOF says. “They are essential to our ability to respond swiftly to all wildfires and suppress them early on.”

Miller says, “If a wildfire never starts, firefighters lives, the lives of Virginians, personal property and valuable habitat remain safe.” Preventing wildfires from starting in the first place is of utmost importance. In Virginia, nearly 95% of all wildfires are human-caused and therefore can be prevented.

Extra precautions are needed when burning in the fall due to the abundance of dry grass and leaves on the ground. Gusty winds and low humidity can make a seemingly safe fire burn more intensely and escape control.

“People need to be cautious when performing any outdoor burns this time of year, because weather conditions and drying fuels, such as grasses and leaves, increase the potential for wildfires.”

If a fire does escape control, contact the local fire department immediately. An escaped wildfire, even one burning in grass or weeds, is dangerous.

**The VDOF offers these safety tips for burning debris outdoors:**

- Know current and future weather conditions.
- Do not burn on dry, warm, and windy days.
- Be informed about state and local burning regulations.
- Consult your local fire department for additional information and safety considerations.
- Remember what Smokey Bear has always said: “Only You Can Prevent Wildfires!”

**If you choose to burn:**

- Keep your piles small, if possible, use a 55-gallon drum with a weighted screen lid to provide an enclosed incinerator.
- Have water and tools like a shovel and rake nearby.
- Never leave your fire unattended. If your fire escapes your control, call 911 immediately.

Visit our website for more information and tips on protecting your home and community: <https://dof.virginia.gov/wildland-prescribed-fire/wildfire-prevention/>

Residents should also check the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality’s [open burn regulations](#) prior to any outdoor fire and consult with local fire officials about burning conditions in the area.

“We all have a responsibility to do our part to prevent wildfires, and now is the time for all Virginians to learn about how they can reduce wildfire risks and ensure the safety of their homes, families, and communities,” says Miller.

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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.