



For Immediate Release

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Extreme Caution Urged When Burning Debris

The “burn pile” is a common feature on many Virginia properties. Many people use fire as a means of getting rid of yard debris, especially after storms. However, debris burning without the proper precautions in place can lead to burn piles becoming wildfires.

“We understand that burning leaves and sticks is a common way of cleaning up your yard. However, if you decide to burn your yard debris, there are certain precautions that should be taken,” said John Miller of the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF).

With the 2022 wildfire season right around the corner, the VDOF is urging Virginians to use extreme caution when burning debris from recent snowstorms, as well as any other yard debris. Here are some important considerations before burning:

- Check local ordinances to make sure burning is permitted in your locality.
- Monitor your local forecast, and never burn on dry, windy days.
- Explore alternative ways to dispose of the debris.

If you do decide to burn, here are some tips to ensure your fire doesn’t become a wildfire.

- Clear the burn site down to the bare soil.
- Keep a water source and a rake or shovel close by your fire.
- Have adequate assistance.
- Never leave your fire or hot coals unattended.
- Make sure your fire is completely extinguished and coals are cool to the touch before leaving the burn site.
- Call 911 for help immediately if your fire escapes. Several minutes may pass before a fire department or the Forestry Department can arrive on the scene.

“The storms that came through Virginia in January left large amounts of vegetative debris in their wake,” Miller said. “We encourage Virginians to find alternative ways to dispose of this debris. If you choose to burn, please do so responsibly. It only takes one spark or ember to start a wildfire.”

For more information, visit the VDOF [webpage](#) on safe debris burning.

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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.