



For Immediate Release

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Virginia's 4 PM Burning Law Starts Tomorrow

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and fire departments throughout Virginia are reminding the public about the 4 p.m. burn ban, which begins Tuesday, February 15. The law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. if the fire is in or within 300 feet of woodlands, brush, or fields with dry grass and other flammable materials.

Although Virginia also has a wildfire season in the fall, more than 60% of the Commonwealth's annual average of 700 wildfires happen in the spring - especially in March and April.

Many areas have had a lot of moisture recently, but Virginia is still recovering from a significant deficit last year. Sunny days with brisk winds can easily dry out fuels, such as storm-downed limbs, increasing the potential for wildfires.

Even though burning is allowed from 4 p.m. to midnight, the Virginia Department of Forestry says you should be cautious of weather conditions and winds. "The 4 PM Burning Law is one of the most important tools we have in the prevention of wildfires in Virginia," said John Miller, VDOF's director of fire and emergency response. "The number one cause of wildfires in the Commonwealth is people burning yard debris and/or trash, and the 4 PM Burning Law goes a long way toward reducing the risk associated with wildfires each year."

Violation of the burn law is a Class 3 misdemeanor and is punishable with a fine of up to \$500. Forestry officials say those who allow a fire to "escape" are liable for the cost of suppressing the blaze and any property damage it causes.

Regardless of the time of day or time of year, it is critical to exercise sound judgment when burning. 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 do not have the tools and equipment to contain or control a fire.

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 <http://dof.virginia.gov/laws/index.htm#FireLaws>

To quote 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.