



NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia's Spring Fire Season Begins

4 p.m. burning law in effect through April 30

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof) joins fire departments throughout the Commonwealth to raise awareness about fire safety this spring. Due to weather conditions, available “fuel,” and increased recreational activity, the possibility of wildfires surges this time of year. Last week, several wildfires were contained in western regions of the state.

Virginia has entered the spring fire season which means the 4 p.m. burning law will be in effect from Feb. 15 through April 30. The law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. if the fire is within 300 feet of woodlands, brush, or fields with dry grass or other flammable materials.

Although Virginia also has a wildfire season in the fall, more than 60 percent of the Commonwealth's annual average of 700 wildfires occur in the spring, especially in March and April. Rising temperatures, low humidity and windy conditions increase the potential for wildfires and make them harder to extinguish.

Violation of the burning law is a class-3 misdemeanor and punishable with a fine of up to \$500. Those who allow a fire to “escape” may be liable for the cost of suppressing a fire and any resulting property damage. To learn more about Virginia's 4 p.m. burning law and fire prevention, visit: <https://dof.virginia.gov/wildland-prescribed-fire/fire-laws/4-pm-burning-law/>

Please note: In addition to the statewide 4 p.m. burning law, individual cities and counties may have specific burn laws, bans or restrictions. Check with local officials in your area before burning.

“The 4 p.m. burning law is one of the most important tools we have in the prevention of wildfires in Virginia,” said VDof Director of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller. “The number one cause of wildfires in the Commonwealth is escaped debris burning, and the 4 p.m. burning law goes a long way toward reducing the risk associated with wildfires each year. VDof coordinates closely with local firefighters and first responders across Virginia, so please call 911 to report a fire.”

Keep these things in mind this spring:

- The 4 p.m. burn law applies to any fires not contained within a fireproof device (e.g., campfires, brush piles, warming fires, etc.)
- Even when burning after 4 p.m., fires should never be left unattended
- Be cautious of changing weather conditions. Avoid burning during dry and windy conditions
- No fire may be started, and nothing can be added to a fire after midnight
- Have a shovel, rake and charged hose on hand for controlling the fire
- Call 911 if a fire escapes your control

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About the Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP) 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. VDOP is an equal opportunity provider.