

Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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SC Forestry Commission to issue statewide burning ban

COLUMBIA—With the approach of Hurricane Dorian, the South Carolina Forestry Commission will issue a State Forester’s Burning Ban for all counties, effective at 7 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4.

A State Forester’s Burning Ban prohibits all outdoor burning, including yard debris burning, campfires and burning for forestry, wildlife or agricultural purposes in unincorporated areas.

“It may seem counterintuitive to call for a burning ban because of the rain that the eastern half of the state is expected to receive from this system over the next few days,” said SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones, “but there are other risk factors influencing this decision-making process.”

Among those risk factors are elevated drought conditions over much of the state and relative scarcity of firefighting, law enforcement and other emergency personnel resources that are committed to hurricane-related response before and after the hurricane’s arrival.

Forecasts for the eastern half of the state over the next few days also call for higher-than-normal wind gusts, which combined with elevated drought conditions create the potential for outdoor fires escaping easily and spreading rapidly.

After consultation with Gov. Henry McMaster and other emergency response organizations Tuesday, State Forester Scott Phillips declared the ban to reduce possible wildfire ignitions. The burning ban is primarily intended to ease the strain on firefighting personnel – from both the Forestry Commission and from local fire departments – many of whom were dispatched to coastal regions to assist with evacuation procedures and law enforcement activities, and later, damage assessment and cleanup.

In addition to performing its normal wildfire suppression operations, the Forestry Commission has deployed its own law enforcement and incident management personnel to support the state’s coordinated emergency response.

The ban will stay in effect until further notice, which will come in the form of an official announcement from the Forestry Commission.

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As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects 12.9 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.

Did you know...?

An astounding **98 percent** of all wildland fires are caused by human activities, and escaped debris burns are responsible for nearly **50 percent** of them.

South Carolina Forestry Commission firefighters respond to an average of 1,800 wildland fires every year, burning about 12,000 acres annually.