



# News Release

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## **HIGH FIRE DANGER IMPACTS OUTDOOR BURNING**

Though burning leaf piles and campfires are hallmarks of fall, Georgia's current drought is impacting decisions to burn outdoors. The Georgia Forestry Commission is urging everyone to follow established procedures and exercise extreme caution when using fire outside.

"There's a five step fire danger system used nationally, and right now Georgia is in the four and five categories, indicating very high fire danger," said Georgia Forestry Commission Chief of Protection Frank Sorrells. "The decision to burn must be made on specific weather criteria in each location, and because safety is always our top concern, burn permitting may be restricted based on the fire danger forecast."

Burn permits issued by the Georgia Forestry Commission are required for any outdoor burning in the state to help prevent wildfires and problems generated by smoke. In 54 counties, primarily in north Georgia, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division sets annual summer burning restrictions to reduce emissions from ground level ozone that may jeopardize air quality. Those restrictions are set to be lifted on Tuesday, October 1.

"The GFC will resume issuing burn permits on a day to day basis, following our established fire danger and smoke management procedures, in those counties which have been under the EPD Burn Ban since May first," said Sorrells. "We recognize the importance of and promote prescribed burning for the many wildfire prevention, forest management and agriculture benefits it provides. However, right now we're asking everyone to be extremely vigilant when doing any open burning, including burning yard debris."

Wildfire activity is on the rise statewide, according to Sorrells. Over the past three months, Georgia Forestry Commission wildland firefighters have responded to 41 percent more fires than its previous five-year average. Sorrells said escaped debris burns are the number one cause of wildfires in our state, and it may be necessary and wise to delay or postpone open burning if local



conditions are unfavorable. The GFC recommends those who burn keep tools on hand such as water, a shovel and a cell phone.

"Never hesitate to call 911, and never leave your fire unattended" Sorrells said.

The 54 counties whose EPD summer burn bans are being lifted are: Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Bibb, Butts, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Clarke, Clayton, Cobb, Columbia, Coweta, Crawford, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Floyd, Forsyth, Fulton, Gordon, Gwinnett, Hall, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Jasper, Jones, Lamar, Lumpkin, Madison, Meriwether, Monroe, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Paulding, Peach, Pickens, Pike, Polk, Putnam, Richmond, Rockdale, Spalding, Troup, Twiggs, Upson, Walker and Walton.

For specific information about conducting open burning, permitting requirements and current fire conditions in your area, contact your county's GFC office or visit [GaTrees.org](http://GaTrees.org).

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