



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRE DANGER ALERTS AND CAMPFIRE RESTRICTIONS ISSUED AS SPRING FOREST FIRE RISKS INCREASE

(12/P39) TRENTON – The New Jersey Forest Fire Service has issued fire danger alerts and implemented stage one campfire restrictions throughout New Jersey today as prolonged dry and windy conditions continue in the state.

“It is paramount that New Jersey residents and visitors exercise extreme caution to prevent wildfires at this particularly vulnerable time, with little rain and low humidity,” said State Forest Fire Service Acting Chief Michael Drake. “The Forest Fire Service is increasing level one fire patrols and we are increasing our response capabilities as this drying trend continues.”

The fire danger level is determined to be very high by the Forest Fire Service in the Division B region of New Jersey, which covers Burlington, Monmouth and Ocean counties, as well as Middlesex County south of the Raritan River.

The fire danger is graded as high in the Division A region, which includes Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic Somerset, Union and Warren counties, plus Hopewell Township, Mercer County and Middlesex County, north of the Raritan River; and the Division C region, including Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties.

Stage one campfire restrictions are in effect for all three regions today, meaning fires directly on the ground are prohibited unless in a prepared fire ring constructed of steel, stone, brick or concrete with a gravel or masonry base. Fires on mineral soil which will not endanger the forest, such as in a gravel pit, may be permitted at the discretion of the Forest Fire warden issuing the permit.

Caution also should be exercised with smoking equipment and the use of equipment that could discharge sparks.

Through April 2, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service has responded to 359 wildfires that have burned 286 acres, compared with 190 fires that burned 186 acres during the same period last year.

Fire danger is exacerbated by the fact that the forest canopy has not leafed out, allowing the sun and wind to dry the forest floor.

Ninety-nine percent of all wildfires in New Jersey are caused by human activity, usually carelessness, negligence or arson. The Forest Fire Service works to prevent wildfires year-round through public outreach and education efforts, prescribed burning operations, and maintenance of fire breaks.

Wildfire risks increase with every new structure built in or adjacent to forests. Wildfires can spread quickly in New Jersey, threatening homes, property, natural resources and human lives, yet most are preventable.

Follow these guidelines to reduce the risk of fires:

- Use ashtrays in vehicles. Discarding cigarettes, matches and smoking materials is a violation of New Jersey law.
- Obtain necessary permits for campfires. Don't leave fires unattended. Douse them completely.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children. Teach them the dangers of fire.
- People living in the forest should maintain a defensible buffer by clearing vegetation within 30 feet of any structures. Also, make sure fire trucks can pass down your driveway.
- Report suspicious vehicles and individuals. Arson is a major cause of forest fires in New Jersey.

For more information on wildfires and fire safety, visit www.njwildfire.org

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