



West Virginia Division of Forestry
www.wvforestry.com
Joe Manchin III, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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Leslie Fitzwater, Public Information Specialist 304.957.9342,
Leslie.C.Fitzwater@wv.gov

Contact: Ben Webster, Assistant State Forester 304.558.2788,
Ben.C.Webster@wv.gov

Spring Forest Fire Season Starts Monday, March 1, 2010

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Forestry officials say that starting Monday unless there is an inch or more of snow on the ground in your area you can't burn anything outdoors from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 1 is the beginning of the spring forest fire season in West Virginia; the season runs through May 31.

"We still have snow in many areas of the state and forecasts for even more this coming week," said Ben Webster, the Division of Forestry's assistant state forester for fire protection. "Right now, I don't expect to see too many fires, but once things start thawing, we could be in for a hectic season."

This winter's unusually heavy and frequent snows have downed trees and limbs that could cause problems once snows melt and landowners start clearing their properties of debris. Webster reminds landowners who choose to burn the debris left from this winter's storms to do so carefully.

"Start with small piles of debris that you can easily keep within safety strips," Webster recommends. "Add more debris to the fires as they burn down."

State law allows residents to burn only vegetative materials, including brush, leaves and limbs. Anyone conducting outdoor burning must stay with the fire until it is completely extinguished. In the case of an escaped fire, the person who set it is liable for the costs of fighting the fire and must pay for any damages to other people's property. This also may result in a misdemeanor charge and a fine of up to \$300.

Other outdoor-burning requirements include clearing a safety strip of at least 10 feet around the materials being burned. To prevent wayward sparks from igniting a forest fire, the strip must be cleared down to the mineral soil.

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Regional Offices
Farmington (304) 825-6983
Beckley (304) 256-6775
Milton (304) 743-6186



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Webster suggests keeping a rake, shovel and water hose nearby in case a fire does escape. If a fire breaks over into the woods, Webster says to call 911 immediately.

For more information about the state's outdoor burning laws, visit the Division of Forestry's Web site at www.wvforestry.com.

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