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**Dry Fall Increases Wildfire Risk in Tennessee as State Agencies Provide Tips on Outdoor Fire Prevention**

**Nashville, Tenn.** –It’s dry in Tennessee and with little or no rain in the state’s weather forecast for the next 10 days, state officials are asking everyone to take extra precaution to prevent outdoor fires from getting out of control.

“Drought and dry conditions have contributed to 837 wildfires burning 20,000 acres in Tennessee so far this year,” said Director Patrick Sheehan, of the **Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)**. “We are asking everyone spending any time outdoors this season to be aware of the fire risk and to take extra care with potential sources of fire ignition. This will help us avoid needless and potentially deadly wildfires.”

The **State Fire Marshal’s Office**, a division of the **Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance (TDCI)** offers the following basic, outdoor fire safety tips:

* Have an adult present at all times when a bonfire, chiminea, fire pit, or outdoor fireplace is burning.
* Keep children and pets at least three feet away from open flames.
* Dried flowers, cornstalks, crepe paper and other types of fall décor are highly flammable and should be kept a safe distance, at least three feet, from open flames and heat sources, including light bulbs and heaters.
* Consider using battery-operated flameless candles and solar-powered patio (tiki) torches outside in place of an open flame. Flameless candles come in all colors, shapes and sizes, and are a safer alternative.
* It is safest to use battery-operated candles or glow sticks in a jack-o’-lantern. If you use a flame candle, use extreme caution and keep them well attended at all times.
* A grill should be placed well away from the home and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
* If using a charcoal grill, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

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Fall Fire/Page 2

* Never leave a grill unattended.
* Never park a vehicle over a pile of leaves.  The heat from the vehicle's catalytic converter or exhaust system could ignite the leaves below.

“While the fall is a great season to spend time outside, we remind Tennesseans always to incorporate basic fire safety measures into their outdoor agenda,” said **State Fire Marshal** and **TDCI** Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak.

The **Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry** encourages the following precautions to make sure outdoor burning is handled properly:

* Avoid burning on dry, windy days.
* Burn late in the day after the wind has quieted and humidity begins to increase, usually after 5:00 p.m.
* Check to see if weather changes are expected. Outdoor burning should be postponed if shifts in wind direction, higher winds or wind gusts are forecast.
* Before doing any burning, establish wide control lines down to bare mineral soil at least five feet wide around any burn barrels and even wider around brush piles and other piled debris to be burned. The larger the debris pile, the wider the control line needed to ensure that burning materials won’t be blown or roll off the pile into vegetation outside the line.
* Stay with all outdoor fires until they are completely out.
* Keep water and hand tools ready in case your fire should attempt to spread.
* If you burn in a burn barrel or other trash container, be sure it is equipped with a ½" mesh screen or metal grid to keep burning material contained.
* Stay abreast of wildfire danger levels and heed warnings and bans on outdoor burning.
* Be aware of where your smoke is going. Avoid burning when your smoke will be bothersome to neighbors or sensitive locations such as highways.

“Careless debris burning is a major cause of wildland fires,” said John Kirksey with the **Tennessee Division of Forestry**. “We want everyone to exercise extreme caution when outdoors with all potential sources of wildfire ignition, to avoid senseless and potentially deadly wildfires.”

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Fall Fire/Page 3

From October 15 through May 15, anyone starting an open-air fire in Tennessee within 500 feet of a forest, grassland, or woodland must by law secure a burning permit from the **Tennessee Division of Forestry**. Local jurisdictions may have other ordinances and permitting systems in place for open-air burning.

The free permit can be obtained online at [www.BurnSafeTN.org](http://www.BurnSafeTN.org) or by calling a local Division of Forestry burn permit phone number, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. These phone numbers, as well fire prevention tips and other wildfire resource information, can be found at [www.BurnSafeTN.org](http://www.BurnSafeTN.org).

The **Tennessee Department of Transportation** strongly urges motorists to avoid throwing lit cigarettes out of their vehicles. This type of litter can quickly start grass fires that can lead to dangerous traffic situations, such as low visibility and congestion.

**Tennessee State Parks** is asking state park visitors to be observant with campfires in the campgrounds. Park visitors should immediately report a fire or what could be a potential fire danger to 911, and observe the following basic fire safety tips:

* Use designated areas - Campfires in Tennessee State Parks must be contained within designated grills or fire grates.
* Be responsible - Never leave a fire unattended, even for a minute. Smoke in a car or designated area if possible. Dispose of cigarettes in a non-flammable container. Don't allow children and pets near the campfire and never leave them unsupervised.
* Ensure your campfire is completely extinguished with water before leaving.
* Play it safe - Keep a bucket of water and a shovel nearby. Stack extra wood upwind and away from the fire. After lighting, do not discard the match until it is cold.

**About the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency:** TEMA’s mission is to coordinate preparedness, response and recovery from man-made, natural and technological hazards in a professional and efficient manner in concert with our stakeholders. Follow TEMA on Facebook, [TNDisasterInfo](http://www.facebook.com/TNDisasterInfo), on Twitter, [@T\_E\_M\_A](http://twitter.com/t_e_m_a), and at [www.tnema.org](http://www.tnema.org/).

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