



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2014

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Wildfire Awareness for Landowners

Jackson, MS – Mississippi is no stranger to wildfires. In fiscal year 2013 Mississippi had 20 homes destroyed, 4 homes damaged and 1,384 homes saved. We can thank our MFC fire crews, VFD's and other firefighting partners for those 1,384 homes saved.

Every year Mississippi has landowners who set fires that escape onto other's property. This happens when the person setting the fire is negligent and does not practice safe and responsible burning techniques. Such practices would be construction of proper fire breaks around your property and having a water source of some kind near the fire. Striking the match and then walking away from your fire is as negligent as it gets. Always keep your fire supervised and patrol your boundary lines for possible fire escapes. When people get careless bad things can happen.

Our Arson Fire Investigators are prepared to issue misdemeanor charges and suppression charges for this sort of negligent (careless) behavior. Those fines can be very large if issued. **Statute 97-17-13. Arson; willfully or negligently firing woods, marsh, meadow, etc.; restitution of fire suppression costs** states that if a person has a brush or debris pile or other material which is, or was, being burned and reasonable and prudent efforts were not taken to prevent the spread of the fire onto the lands of another, shall be evidence that such person recklessly or with gross negligence caused the land to burn..

Suppression charges have been issued in the Southwest District in the Monticello area recently, and across the state, for what is known as landowner carelessness or gross negligence. We ask that anyone burning do so responsibly, and remember that when you strike that match you are responsible for both the flames and the smoke. The public can call 1-800-240-5161 (*a toll free number*) to report anyone setting any arson wildfire – be it malicious intent or accidental. You can also visit our website at <http://www.mfc.ms.gov/law-enforcement.php>.

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