



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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February 28, 2014

The Governor Proclaims, March is Wildfire Prevention Month

The Mississippi Forestry Commission is announcing, by proclamation signed by Governor Bryant, that March is designated **Wildfire Prevention Month**. March has historically been one of the state's highest wildfire occurrence months because of dry vegetation and high March winds.

Most the time when people think about wildfires they think Western mountainous states or California. Mississippi has its share of wildfires across the state also. Last Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, which runs from July 01, 2012 – June 30, 2013, the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) responded to 1,474 wildfires which burned 17,567 acres of land. These numbers reflect wildfires the MFC responded to and does not take into account the fires Volunteer Fire Departments (VFD) suppressed. If VFD numbers were added to the MFC numbers they could easily double. These wildfires threatened and destroyed more than timberland across the state during FY13. There were 20 homes destroyed, 4 homes damaged, and 1,384 homes that were threatened as a result of these wildfires.

Wildfire causes are broken down into the following categories; incendiary/arson, debris burning, campfires, equipment use, lighting, railroads, smoking, re-ignition, and miscellaneous. The two main causes of wildfires here in Mississippi are incendiary/arson and debris burning. In FY 13 the MFC responded to 680 incendiary/arson fires that burned 9,125 acres and 584 debris burns that people had let escape which had burned 5,678 acres.

The top ten counties in the state for number of wildfires are as follows: 1. - Pearl River/134 fires, 2. – Lamar/97 fires, 3. – Jackson/71 fires, 4. – Harrison/69 fires, 5. – Hancock/62 fires, 6. - Jefferson Davis/50 fires, 7. – Leake/41 fires, 8. – Stone/39 fires, 9. – George/36 fires, 10. – Lincoln/36 fires.

Mississippi has roughly 19.8 million acres of timberland across the state which provides all kinds of outdoor recreation for the citizens of Mississippi and tourist alike. The Mississippi Forestry Commission is charged by law to suppress any wildfires across the state but it is everybody's responsibility to help protect our forest/timberland and prevent wildfires. Nine out of ten wildfires are caused by humans and are completely preventable.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission asks that you ***Don't Burn on Windy Days.***

Also, become Firewise by following these tips:

- Clear flammable vegetation up to 30 feet away from your house. You can leave some trees as long as their branches are 10 feet away from other trees.
- Eliminate ladder fuels by mowing tall grass, trimming shrubs, and pruning lower branches as described above.
- Keep the lawn watered and mowed short (3 inches or less) on all sides of all buildings.
- Clean the roof, gutters, and windowsills of leaves, needles, and other debris.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission wants you to be aware of how you can protect your home from the destructive forces of wildfire. For more information on the Firewise program and other fire prevention ideas, visit our web site at www.mfc.state.ms.us

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