

Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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CONTACTS:

Doug Wood, Dir. of Communications
(803) 968-1576 CELL
(803) 896-8820 OFFICE
DWood@scfc.gov

Darryl Jones, Fire Chief
(803) 667-1039 CELL
(803) 896-8817 OFFICE
DJones@scfc.gov

SC Forestry Commission to issue statewide burning ban, effective Tuesday, April 7

COLUMBIA—The South Carolina Forestry Commission will declare a State Forester’s Burning Ban for all counties, effective at 6 a.m. Tuesday, April 7.

A State Forester’s Burning Ban prohibits outdoor burning anywhere outside of city/town limits in South Carolina, including:

- **yard debris burns;**
- **forestry, wildlife or agricultural burns** (also known as prescribed, or controlled, burns); and
- **campfires** and other types of recreational open burning.

After consultation with officials with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, State Forester Scott Phillips ordered the statewide burning ban in the interest of public safety amid the current public health threat posed by COVID-19 virus.

Not only can smoke exacerbate the symptoms of those who have contracted the virus, but it also can trigger underlying respiratory issues in otherwise unaffected individuals, which could result in symptoms similar to those the COVID-19 virus is known to cause. “For infected individuals, breathing smoke could make coronavirus symptoms worse, increasing the risk of hospitalization or death,” said Dr. Brannon Traxler, DHEC Physician Consultant. “It could also cause people who have not contracted the coronavirus, but who are presenting COVID-19-like symptoms, to seek medical care at a time when medical resources are already stretched thin.”

“With known coronavirus infections increasing in all 46 counties of the state, we simply cannot continue to allow legal burning under these unprecedented circumstances,” said Phillips. “Reducing outdoor burning will also minimize the strain on local fire departments and other first responders who need to remain available for other COVID-19 response activities.”

Agency leadership acknowledges that prohibiting prescribed burning during what is traditionally the busiest time of year will be difficult for land managers in all parts of the state. “We know how beneficial the practice is for agricultural and forest management, and it is, along with our ongoing fire prevention and education efforts, the best tool we have to reduce both the number and severity of wildfires,” said SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones. “But extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, and the decision to enact this ban really had to be made in the current context.”

The ban will stay in effect until further notice, which will come in the form of an official announcement from the Forestry Commission.

Did you know...?

Escaped debris burns are the number one cause of wildfires in South Carolina, accounting for more than half of the ignitions every year?

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