



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER ADAM H. PUTNAM

For Immediate Release

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Florida Forest Service braces for windy weekend

Milton, FL – Officials with Florida Forest Service’s Blackwater Forestry Center are preparing for what could be a busy weekend if predicted weather conditions come to fruition.

Several weather factors contribute to fire potential – wind, humidity and fuel moisture being the key elements. Portions of our area will see high winds (15-20 mph) and moderate humidity (less than 50%) at some point over the next three days. Combine those factors with a lack of rainfall over the past week and there is a potential for increased fire activity both in terms of number of fire and intensity of fires that we might see.

In response, the Forest Service is ensuring proper staffing of strategic locations throughout Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties, restricting burn authorizations and will coordinate with key cooperating agencies throughout the weekend.

Residents are urged not to burn yard waste during periods of high winds and should follow local burn laws and restrictions and heed the required setbacks for burning leaves, pine straw and other debris when the time is right to resume such burning.

Please see the attached graphic on required setbacks and some tips for residents on outdoor burning.

For more information, contact Joe Zwierzchowski with the Florida Forest Service at (850) 957-6140 ext. 127 or (850) 206-2675.

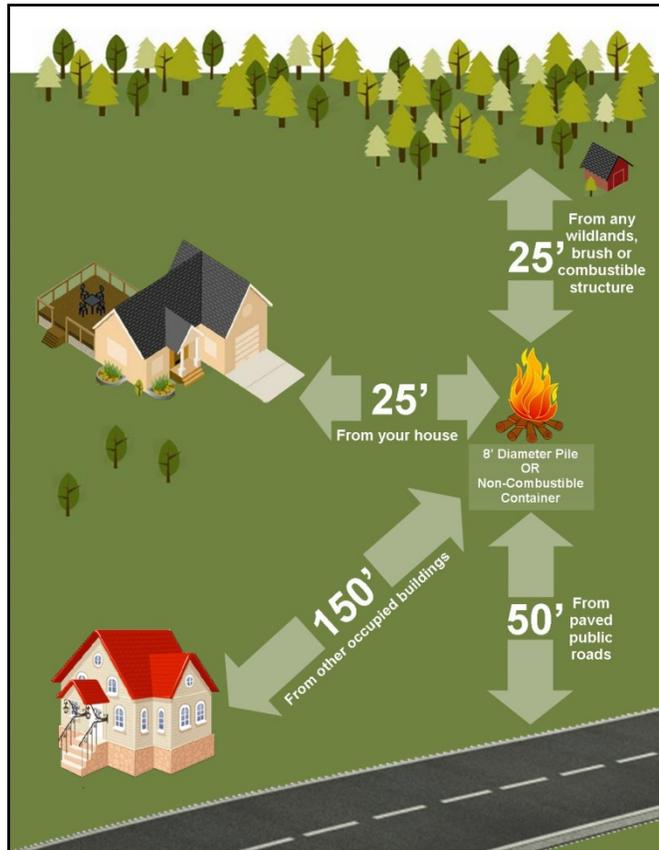
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Some tips and requirements to keep in mind before you burn yard waste include:

- Check with your city or county before you burn, some areas have stricter rules regarding burning and some municipalities do not allow any burning within city limits.
- 25 feet from any forested area (grasslands, brush or wildlands).
- 25 feet from your home or other combustible structure.
- 50 feet from any paved or public roadway.
- 150 feet from any occupied dwelling other than your own home.
- Legal burning hours are between 8 a.m. and one hour before sunset.
- It is illegal to burn household garbage (including paper products), treated lumber, plastics, rubber materials, tires, pesticide, paint and aerosol containers.
- Piles greater than 8 feet in diameter will require authorization from the Florida Forest Service.
- Clear down to bare, mineral soil around your pile to prevent the fire from spreading.
- Don't burn on windy days.
- Never leave a fire unattended – even for a moment.
- Grass fires can spread quickly. Be prepared. Keep handy a water hose, shovel or other means to put out the fire.
- Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving it – no smoke and no heat.
- If your fire escapes, call for help quickly. Several minutes may pass before a fire department or the Forest Service can arrive on scene.
- If your fire escapes, you might be held liable for the cost of suppression and damages to the property of others.



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