

Media Advisory

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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More – and larger – wildfires expected this year

Need for fire prevention and safety greater as SC enters peak of wildfire season

COLUMBIA—The South Carolina Forestry Commission is cautioning citizens about the increase in fire danger statewide and the need to exercise vigilance when burning outdoors.

A prolonged drought, especially pronounced in the Upstate, is contributing to the elevated risk of wildfire that already exists this time of year. “April is traditionally the height of our wildfire season,” said SCFC Fire Chief Darryl Jones. “But we’ve already seen a dramatic increase in both the number and size of fires around the state this year.”

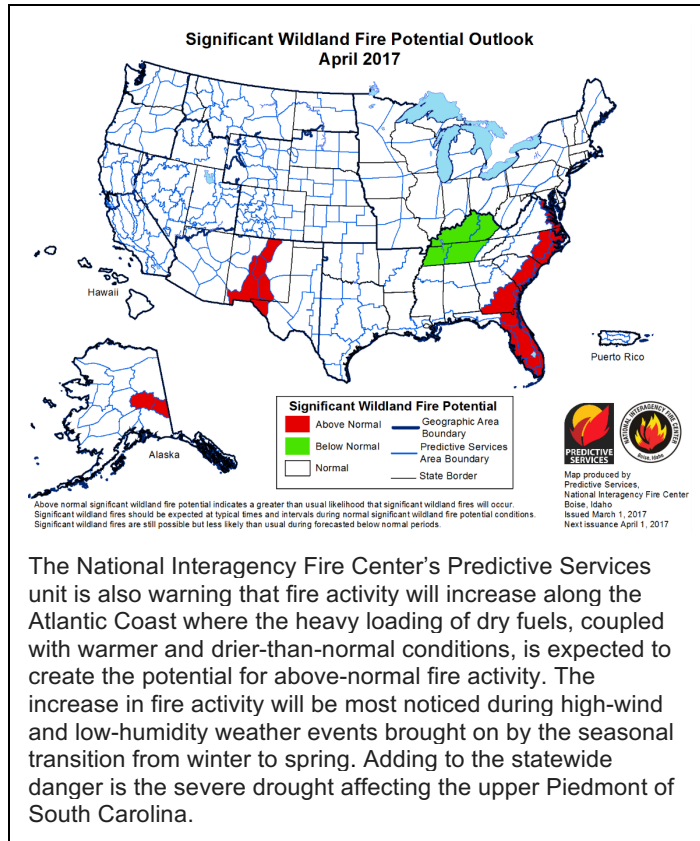
The SCFC has responded to 1,782 wildfires this fiscal year, compared to last year’s total of 989, **an increase of 80 percent**.

Additionally, wildfires have burned 23,821 acres this fiscal year, a **437 percent increase** from last year’s record low of 5,446 acres.

Given this backdrop of increased fire danger, it is especially important that people exercise extreme vigilance when doing outdoor burning. “We know that more than 80 percent of wildfires are caused by humans and that careless debris burning accounts for half of the fires we respond to,” said Jones. “As we say in all of our fire prevention talks and materials, we want people to ‘Think Before You Burn.’”

That means making notification to the Forestry Commission before burning yard debris or conducting prescribed burns, taking the proper precautions to contain the fire, staying with the fire at all times and dousing the fire until it is completely out and cold. If the fire does escape, please call 911 immediately.

State law requires citizens to notify the Forestry Commission before burning outdoors. In most cases, the law applies to burning leaves, limbs and branches that people clean up from their yards. The notification law does not apply within town or city limits. Find every county’s toll-free notification number on the SCFC home page or at <https://www.state.sc.us/forest/fyard.htm>.



The National Interagency Fire Center’s Predictive Services unit is also warning that fire activity will increase along the Atlantic Coast where the heavy loading of dry fuels, coupled with warmer and drier-than-normal conditions, is expected to create the potential for above-normal fire activity. The increase in fire activity will be most noticed during high-wind and low-humidity weather events brought on by the seasonal transition from winter to spring. Adding to the statewide danger is the severe drought affecting the upper Piedmont of South Carolina.

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As the only state agency responsible for wildfire suppression in all unincorporated areas of the state, the South Carolina Forestry Commission protects 13 million acres from wildland fire. More than 500 county, municipal and volunteer fire departments operate more than 1,100 fire stations in South Carolina. The Forestry Commission cooperates with these departments to prevent and control structural and wildland fires, employing highly trained firefighters and specialized equipment when fires burn into forested areas that are difficult to reach.