

Red Flag Fire Alert

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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CONTACTS: **Doug Wood** - (803) 968-1576

Statewide Red Flag Fire Alert in effect until further notice

Outdoor burning discouraged because of weather conditions, elevated fire risk

COLUMBIA - The South Carolina Forestry Commission is issuing a statewide Red Flag Fire Alert, effective immediately.

The purpose of the alert is to discourage people from doing any outdoor burning when weather conditions present an elevated risk of wildfire. Weather forecasts for most of the state over the next three days include very low relative humidity and elevated drought conditions, which combine with dry fuels on the ground to create the potential for outdoor fires escaping easily and spreading rapidly.

"We're going to see very favorable conditions for wildfire ignitions over the next few days, particularly with the relative humidity values, which will remain low at least until the weekend," said Darryl Jones, SCFC Fire Chief.

A Red Flag Fire Alert does not prohibit outdoor burning, provided that all other state and local regulations are followed, but the Forestry Commission strongly encourages citizens to voluntarily postpone any such burning until the alert is lifted. However, a Red Flag Fire Alert does trigger certain county or local ordinances that restrict outdoor fires, so residents should contact their local fire departments to check whether such restrictions apply in their areas.

The Forestry Commission also encourages those working on or with rail lines or other heavy equipment near woodlands to be especially vigilant about preventing sparks and other ignitions from the operation of such apparatus. Any spark, even from a discarded cigarette, in such conditions can trigger a wildfire.

The elevated risk of wildfire in these conditions also places additional physical stress on the wildland and structural firefighters who respond to fires, many of whom operate bulldozers to plow containment lines around such fires. Almost half of the Forestry Commission's fleet of bulldozers are enclosed-cab models, which help to protect their operators from flames, smoke, ash, soot, noxious chemicals and falling trees; more than half, however, are older, open-cab models that offer less protection from these elements.

The Red Flag Fire Alert will remain in effect until lifted by the Commission, whose fire response teams will continuously monitor the situation throughout the weekend.

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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 12.9 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.

SC Forestry Commission, 5500 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212

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