



Texas Department of Public Safety

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DPS urges Texans to help prevent wildfires

The Texas Department of Public Safety is urging Texans to use caution and avoid situations that could cause wildfires to break out, especially during the July 4th holiday period.

“Although fireworks are a traditional way to celebrate holidays like the Fourth of July, we are urging cities, counties and families to cancel fireworks plans this year,” said Steven C. McCraw, director of the DPS. “It’s just too dry, and our firefighting resources are stretched too thin to be able to cope with potentially massive outbreaks of fires caused by fireworks.”

As of June 19, more than 3 million acres have burned in Texas during a fire season that started last December. Those 10,848 fires had a fiscal impact of more than \$116 million in damage. Two volunteer firefighters—one from Cactus and one from Eastland—died in April while fighting fires. Since Dec. 21, wildfires also claimed 514 homes, while firefighters have saved 16,342 homes.

As the statewide drought continues, concerns are building that even more fires will break out in Texas. An estimated 90 percent of all Texas wildfires are caused by human activity. The greatest single cause is when burning debris is not properly contained and sparks or burning trash blow into the air.

To help prevent fires:

- Be careful when pulling off a road or driving into a field. Hot catalytic converters can ignite dry vegetation.
- Avoid burning trash. Even a barrel covered with a screen can allow a spark to escape, igniting nearby dry vegetation.
- Do not use fireworks during holidays.
- If you smoke in your car, extinguish cigarettes in vehicle ashtrays. Never toss a cigarette out of a car window, and don’t put cigarettes out on the ground.
- Keep a fire extinguisher and water handy when working outdoors with equipment that gets hot, or involves sparks, such as welding equipment. Water down outdoor work areas in advance if possible.

For more information on how to protect your home or ranch from wildfires, see the DPS website at http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/pages/pio_wildfire_awareness.htm and <http://agrillife.tamu.edu/drought/>.

For more information on fire danger and advisories, see the Texas Forest Service website at: <http://texasforests-service.tamu.edu>.

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