



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
 DEPARTMENT of RESOURCES and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
 DIVISION OF FORESTS AND LANDS
 172 Pembroke Road, Concord, New Hampshire 03301

603-271-2214
 FAX: 603-271-6488
 www.nhdf.org

State of New Hampshire
 Department of Resources and Economic Development
 DIVISION OF FORESTS AND LANDS
 172 Pembroke Rd.
 Concord, NH 03301
 Phone: 603-227-8734; Fax: 603-271-6488; Email: douglas.miner@dred.nh.gov

For Immediate Release

State Forestry Officials Urge Vigilance Regarding Wildfire Threat

Concord, NH (October 24, 2016) – State forestry and fire officials urge residents and recreationalists to remain vigilant regarding the increasing threat of wildfires in the state. Fall is usually a busy time for wildfire activity with campfires, debris burning, equipment use, careless disposal of smoking materials and wood ashes being the primary causes. With the prolonged statewide drought conditions currently ranging from abnormally dry to extreme in southern NH, this fire season will likely be more challenging and potentially more dangerous than normal. “The wildfires that we experienced during late summer and early fall have been very labor intensive to suppress” stated Steven Sherman, Chief of the Forest Protection Bureau with the NH Division of Forests and Lands. This has been compounded by the fact that many small water sources normally available for fire suppression are now dry. “As the forest fuels continue to dry and new fuels are added with the impending leaf drop the potential for dangerous and costly large wildfires throughout the state is very real” said Sherman. Given the current conditions, authorities advise caution with any ignition source or open burning. A spark from any type of power equipment, or even trailer safety chains contacting pavement can spark a wildfire. A similar occurrence recently ignited a small wildfire in Coos County in conjunction with a timber harvest operation when a chain sparked after contacting a rock. “This is indicative of the relatively low moisture content present in our forest fuels due to the prolonged drought” stated Sherman.

As colder nights become more prevalent and wood stoves, wood boilers and fire places are in use the ashes they create can pose another threat to our forests and wildlands. Residents are reminded to use caution when disposing of potentially live ashes from these wood fired devices. “Wood ash is a surprisingly good insulator and can harbor live embers for many days which can easily ignite a wildfire” said Doug Miner, Forest Ranger and Fire Prevention Specialist. Miner recommends placing ashes in a metal bucket with a lid away from any structure until confirmed cold after soaking them thoroughly with water.

As you enjoy the colorful foliage and natural beauty of our state please help do your part to protect our forest resources and homes from the threat of wildfires. Contact your local forest fire warden or fire department and obtain the required fire permit before conducting any open burning. Recognize that something as simple as introducing “One Less Spark” to our forests and wildlands means “One Less Wildfire.” Smokey Bear, our state’s Forest Rangers and your town Forest Fire Wardens appreciate your assistance.

The New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, Forest Protection Bureau is part of the Department of Resources and Economic Development. To learn more about the Division of Forests and Lands, visit www.nhdf.org or call 603-271-2214.

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