



West Virginia Division of Forestry
www.wvforestry.com
Earl Ray Tomblin, Governor
Randy Dye, Director/State Forester

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**WET SPRING KEPT FOREST FIRES IN CHECK
New outdoor burning hours and increased penalties start Oct. 1, 2011**

Charleston, W. Va. – Officials at the West Virginia Division of Forestry say this year's wet spring weather helped keep low the number of forest fires and the number of acres burned.

From Jan. 1 through May 31, the agency recorded 321 fires and 1,715 acres burned. In comparison, for the same period in 2010 the agency reported 413 fires and 12,067 acres burned.

Debris fires continue to be the leading cause of fires in West Virginia because they can easily escape their confines. Of the 321 fires this spring, 135 were the result of people allowing debris fires to escape and ignite the woods.

To help combat this, the Division of Forestry requested and received from the West Virginia Legislature amendments to the state's burning laws. Beginning Oct. 1, 2011, outdoor burning will be prohibited until after 5 p.m. during fall and spring forest fire seasons. All fires must be extinguished by 7 a.m. No outdoor burning will be allowed from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. during forest fire seasons. Up until now, outdoor burning hours started at 4 p.m.

Director/State Forester Randy Dye says that pushing back the outdoor burning hours by just one hour will help reduce the number of fires in the state.

"The potential for forest fires is greatest during the afternoon because of daytime heat, lower humidity and stronger winds. Even starting a fire an hour later at 5 p.m. instead of 4 p.m. will go a long way toward decreasing the risk of a fire spreading because of weather conditions."

In addition to changes in the forest fire season burning hours, the Legislature also increased the maximum fine for illegal burning or escaped fires from \$300 to \$1,000. Fines now range from a minimum of \$100 to a maximum of \$1,000. A new civil penalty of \$200 also may be assessed; money collected from the civil penalty will supplement the agency's wild land fire suppression budget.

Regional Offices
Farmington 304.825.6983
Beckley 304.256.6775
Milton 304.743.6186



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For more information about the state's outdoor burning laws and fire safety, visit the Division of Forestry's website at www.wvforestry.com.

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