



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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### **Spring Forest Fire Hazard Season Begins Tomorrow** *Outdoor burning restrictions take effect Feb. 15*

**Frankfort, Ky.** (Feb. 14, 2014) – It doesn't make sense for wildfires to start easily when Kentucky has had such a run of cold, wet weather but how wet or cold the ground is has little to do with how vulnerable dead grass is to a spark.

"Despite recent precipitation, fine dead fuels like grass, leaves and twigs are rapidly dried with minimal sunlight and wind," said Leah MacSwords, director of the Division of Forestry. "With only a few hours of sunlight and wind these fuels can become primed for carrying a wildfire. It is very important that people not develop a false confidence during wet conditions, and take all necessary precautions with any outdoor burning."

Kentucky law designates Feb. 15 through April 30 as spring forest fire hazard season. During this time, it is illegal to burn anything within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland between the daylight hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The law is intended to prevent forest fires by allowing outdoor burning only after 6 p.m. when conditions are less likely to cause a wildfire to spread.

Harsh temperatures mean drier vegetation, making it easier for a fire to start and spread. Even if the ground is so wet you can't walk without sinking, the vegetation on top of the ground is tinder just waiting for a spark to ignite. The division reports there have been 55 fires burning 1,506 acres since Jan. 1, 2014.

"This law is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent wildfires," said MacSwords. "Downed trees, branches and leaves from winter storms become 'forest fuels' that increase the danger of a forest fire. By adhering to the law and burning after 6 p.m., fires are less likely to escape and threaten people, their property and the forests of Kentucky."

“Of course arsonists don’t pay attention to burning restrictions and a large part of our wildfires are started by arsonists,” said MacSwords. “The best way to stop arsonists from endangering lives and property is for people to make the call. By that I mean call the Target Arson Hotline at 1-800-27-ARSON.”

People should contact their local fire department if they have any questions about local restrictions regarding burning.

For more information about fire hazard seasons, outdoor burning laws and safe burning practices, contact the Kentucky Division of Forestry at 1-800-866-0555 or visit the division’s website at <http://forestry.ky.gov>.

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**Editor’s Note:** The mission of the Kentucky Division of Forestry is to protect and enhance the forest resources of the Commonwealth. The agency is responsible for preventing and suppressing wildfires on state and private lands as well as providing assistance to landowners and communities for the purpose of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of our forests to meet the needs of present and future generations.