



# DEP NEWS RELEASE

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Chris Christie, Governor  
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor  
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## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION URGES CAUTION DURING WILDFIRE SEASON** *STATE FIRE OFFICIALS WARN DRY AND WINDY SPRINGTIME CONDITIONS INCREASE FIRE RISKS*

**(15/P39) TRENTON** – With spring wildfire season under way, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service urges the public to be extra cautious when outdoors in order to reduce the risk of fires. Wildfire risk is currently rated as high statewide. Risks are likely to increase during forecasts for warmer temperatures and dry conditions.

Being extra mindful about reducing the risk for wildfires is critical at this time of year, state wildfire experts say.

“Wildfire risks increase at this time of year because weather conditions tend to be dry and windy,” said State Fire Warden Bill Edwards. “At the same time, dry conditions can cause leaf litter and debris on the forest floor to act as tinder for larger wildfires that can reach tree canopies, increasing risks to properties.”

“Wildfires are not limited to rural, wooded areas,” said State Forester Lynn Fleming. “It’s important that homeowners take note of any conditions around their properties, such as dead or dying trees or wild shrubs, that could increase risk of threats to property.”

“Given the right conditions large grasslands concentrated in urban areas have the potential to threaten life and property,” said William Kramer Jr., Acting Director of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and State Fire Marshal.

From January 1 through April 26, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service responded to 324 wildfires that burned 442 acres, compared with 488 fires that burned 6,127 acres during the same period last year.

Most wildfire or urban grassland fires are caused by human activity such as carelessness, negligence or arson. As a result, the Forest Fire Service, within the New Jersey State Forestry Services, works to prevent wildfires year-round through public outreach and education efforts,

maintenance of fire breaks and prescribed burning operations.

Additionally, wildfire risks also increase with every new structure built in, or next to, forests. These blazes can spread quickly in New Jersey, threatening homes, property, natural resources and human lives. Most are preventable.

The basic approach the Forest Fire Service uses to contain larger wildfires is to surround them with containment lines consisting of cleared breaks in the woods, existing roads, and topographical features such as wetlands and rivers. The fire is then allowed to burn itself out.

For more information on wildfire safety, prevention, tips on protecting your home, and current conditions, visit: [www.njwildfire.org](http://www.njwildfire.org)

Residents can follow these guidelines to reduce fire risk:

- Use ashtrays in vehicles. Discarding cigarettes, matches and smoking materials on the ground is a violation of New Jersey law.
- Obtain necessary permits for campfires. Don't leave fires unattended. Douse them completely.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children. Teach them about the dangers of fire.
- People living in forested or wooded areas should maintain a defensible buffer by clearing vegetation within 30 feet of any structures. Also, make sure fire trucks can access driveways.
- Report suspicious vehicles and individuals to authorities.
- Be careful when using wood stoves and fireplaces, both of which can emit embers that can spark fires. Also, fully douse ashes with water before disposal.
- Contact your local fire official or fire department for fire prevention programs specific to your township.

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