



General Order

Department of Fire & EMS

G.O. #: 11-1-24

Subject: Statewide Burn Ban (Any open burning)

Date: November 1, 2024

Authority: Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director *MWR*

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is implementing a statewide ban on open air burning, effective today, November 1, in all Maryland counties.

Extremely dry conditions persist across the state and have led to an above average number of wildfires statewide, and conditions are not expected to change in the near future. The ban will remain in effect until the Maryland Forest Service determines the state has received enough precipitation to reduce the threat of wildfires statewide.

State law enacted in 2007 authorizes the Department of Natural Resources' Secretary, at the recommendation of the Maryland Forest Service, to implement such a ban when landscape and weather conditions warrant. Open-air burning such as campfires as well as charcoal grilling are not permitted under the burn ban, but state law does permit the use of propane grills. The law defines open-air burning as a fire where any material is burned in the open or in a receptacle other than a furnace, incinerator, or other equipment connected to a stack or chimney.

“We do not make these determinations lightly and understand this may require some people to adjust their plans,” said Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz. “However, a ban of this magnitude is necessary to protect the lives and property of Maryland residents and visitors, as well as the state’s natural resources. Given the significant risk, this is the only option available to us that will allow for statewide monitoring and enforcement to prevent wildfires due to the dangerous conditions. We will be monitoring the wildfire risk daily to determine when it is safe to lift these restrictions.”

Seven Maryland counties – Dorchester, Garrett, Frederick, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester – already have local restrictions in place, and state officials are working with local jurisdictions to monitor conditions and enforcement. Cecil and Washington counties previously advised residents to avoid having outdoor fires earlier this week. Outdoor fire restrictions are also in place for the entire State of Delaware and several Pennsylvania counties. In most areas of Maryland, trees have dropped a significant portion of their leaves, contributing to the ongoing fire risk.

On Friday, the National Weather Service put in place Red Flag Warnings– indicating a high risk of wildfires due to dry, windy weather conditions–in Washington, Frederick, Carroll, Baltimore, Cecil, and Allegany counties until Friday evening.

Authorized agents of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and all police officers that enforce state laws may enforce the restrictions. The fine for a first citation for violating the ban is \$125.

“While fines may be imposed for violations, the most important result of a ban of this type is that it communicates to the public the severity of the situation, and the critical need to act responsibly to protect lives, property and our environment,” said State Forester Anne Hairston-Strang.

Units who respond to such incidents shall request that the involved parties extinguish the applicable open burns and can assist with fire suppression as needed. Should a conflict be perceived or enforcement actions are necessary then local law enforcement should be requested for assistance.