

Wildfire activity increases; DNR is geared-up and ready for the battle

Forty-four wildfires have burned in the last week with more anticipated this weekend due to strong winds and dry conditions in parts of the state.

As the DNR suspends burning permits in several counties where the DNR has burning authority, the public is being asked to use extreme caution, especially with brush or burn piles, and follow the fire restrictions over the next few days until the fire danger minimizes.

"Already, we have more than doubled the number of wildfires this year compared to last year at this time," said Catherine Koele, DNR wildfire prevention specialist. "We've had more than 190 wildfires since the snow-cover disappeared and we have a lot of fire season left before things green-up and the fire danger subsides."

Wisconsin's typical fire season is in the spring shortly after the snow disappears and when dead vegetation is most vulnerable for ignitions and rapid fire spread. This coupled with stretches of no rain, low humidity and high winds can result in increased fire activity.

Fire control resources will be on high alert and ready to mobilize quickly when fires are detected.

"There is a lot of planning and preparation that leads into fire season. This includes training, communications, weather and fuels analysis, equipment inspections, simulations, fire prevention efforts, lots of moving parts to make sure everyone out there is safe when the smoke hits the air," says Koele.

How the public can gear-up too

More than 98 percent of all wildfires in Wisconsin are caused by people. The majority of these fires result from careless burning of debris on the ground in piles or burn barrels. Something as simple as getting a burning permit or being aware of the [daily fire danger](#) can prevent a wildfire.

"DNR burning permits are free and take minutes to obtain online," said Koele. "The key is to get the permit, follow the daily burn restrictions and make sure the fire is completely out."

One of the greater concerns this year is the rising number of unmanned aircraft systems or 'drones' in the air operated by the general public, particularly over fire areas. Wisconsin routinely utilizes aircraft for fire detection and to aid in suppression efforts. The DNR is kindly asking that operators of drones remain clear of the fire area and not interfere with any operations as it does compromise the safety of firefighters and the public.

Being a good steward of the land also means that community members should dial 911 immediately if they see a wildfire or smoke. This allows fire suppression resources to attack the fire quickly in hopes of minimizing the potential impacts.

Find out which counties have [suspended burning permits](#) and witness real-time [fire activity](#) by visiting dnr.wi.gov and enter keyword "[fire](#)." To see the DNR fire control 'gearing up for fire season,' visit the [DNR homepage](#) and watch the short video of all the efforts it takes protect Wisconsin's valuable resources.