

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD, AND FORESTRY**

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PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conditions for high fire danger increasing this week

Oklahomans are urged to use extreme caution as wildfire conditions continue to worsen across the state. Oklahoma Forestry Services (OFS) has worked with volunteer fire departments to battle multiple large wildfires over the past week and is seeing increased suppression difficulty despite the lack of critical fire weather. Conditions for high fire danger are increasing early this week.

“Our firefighters and local fire departments are seeing the normal fighting tactics are becoming increasingly less effective and more time consuming, especially in areas where brush, timber and storm debris are present,” said Mark Goeller, Fire Management Chief, Oklahoma Forestry Services. “This is concerning to us as we see the potential for near-critical fire weather conditions developing early this week.”

Most of the state is under a Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory, which was issued by the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) on February 1 and continues through February 14. The advisory warned of critically dry large fuel moisture, including dead and downed trees and above normal loading of dormant grass fuels in many areas of the state. The National Interagency Fire Center monitors wildfire conditions across the nation and makes plans for the use of national resources where they are most needed.

Oklahoma Forestry Services, working with the National Weather Service, Southern Area Coordination Center and with input from interagency and local fire resources, monitors fire conditions daily for the state and informs the firefighting community with its Fire Situation Report.

Due to current conditions, Oklahoma Forestry Services is urging firefighters and the public to prepare for the possibility of an increase in the number and severity of wildfires. The public is asked to avoid doing anything that can cause a spark. Also, to report any wildfires immediately through 911, avoid the vicinity of wildfires to enable firefighters faster access to fires and to heed all evacuation notices. Families are advised to have a plan for wildfire incidents.

The National Interagency Fire Center and Oklahoma Forestry Services will continue to monitor the situation and coordinate state and national resources as needed. For more information, visit Oklahoma Forestry Services’ website at www.forestry.ok.gov/firedanger or the National Interagency Fire Center’s website www.nifc.gov.

Note to Media: For the latest Oklahoma “Daily Wildfire Situation Report” visit www.forestry.ok.gov and click the link on the homepage (green box on right hand side.) The report contains information about recent fire activity, predicted fire weather and a link for current burn bans.

About Oklahoma Forestry Services

Oklahoma Forestry Services, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, is committed to conserving, enhancing and protecting Oklahoma's 12.5 million acres of forests and woodlands. Since 1925, Oklahoma Forestry Services has worked with individuals and communities throughout the state to create resilient landscapes, fire-adaptive communities and provide wildfire response. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the division also has regional offices in Broken Bow, Wilburton and Tahlequah. For more information, visit <http://www.forestry.ok.gov>.