

Wildfires are often caused by human activity.

The greatest single cause is when burning debris is not properly contained and sparks or burning trash blow into the air.

High winds and dry conditions can set the stage for potentially severe fires.

Oklahomans can help prevent fires if they

- Be careful when pulling off a road or driving into a field. Hot catalytic converters can ignite vegetation.
- Avoid burning trash. Even a barrel covered with a screen can allow a spark to escape, igniting nearby vegetation.
- Do not use fireworks during holidays.
- If you smoke in your car, extinguish cigarettes in vehicle ashtrays. Never toss a cigarette out of a car window, and don't put cigarettes out on the ground.

Know these important Fire Weather Definitions

- **Red Flag Warning** - Product issued when the forecast has a high degree of confidence that conditions will be favorable for the ignition and spread of wild fires. The product does not necessarily indicate that a wild fire is ongoing, but that conditions are highly favorable.

Fire Warning - an urgent message issued at the request of local officials to share detailed evacuation information with people threatened by wildfires

Find more information and resources on-line

Oklahoma Emergency Management (OEM)
[http://www.ok.gov/OEM/Programs & Services/Preparedness/Preparedness - Wildfires.html](http://www.ok.gov/OEM/Programs%20&%20Services/Preparedness/Preparedness%20-%20Wildfires.html)

Oklahoma Forestry Services Ready -Set-Go Program
<http://www.forestry.ok.gov/ready-set-go-program>

Oklahoma Firewise Program
<http://www.forestry.ok.gov/firewise>

Oklahoma Fire Marshal
<http://www.ok.gov/fire/>

Ready.gov - Wildfires
<http://www.ready.gov/wildfires>

National Weather Service Norman – Wildfire Safety
<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/?n=safety-wildfires>

Local Emergency Management

Agency

Phone Number

Creating resiliency throughout the Southwest Region of Oklahoma

Southwest Oklahoma Emergency Management



Wildfire Awareness Series

Prevent Wildfires

Tips for Safe Debris Burning

- **Comply with Local Regulations:** Contact your local fire department in advance to confirm that burning is allowed and to find out whether a permit is required to burn debris.
- **Check the Weather Forecast** Weather fluctuations, such as sudden gusts of wind, could make debris burning spark a wildfire. Call your local fire department the day you plan to burn debris to finalize that the weather is safe enough to burn.
- **Choose a Safe Burning Site** A safe site will be far away from power lines, overhanging limbs, buildings, automobiles, and equipment. It will have vertical clearance at least three times the height of the pile, as heat from the fire extends far past the actual flames that you see. It will have horizontal clearance twice the height of the debris pile.
- **Prepare the Site Correctly:** The ground around the burn site should be surrounded by gravel or mineral soil (dirt) for at least ten feet in all directions. Keep the surrounding area watered down during the burn.
- **If using a Burn Barrel, Make Sure it is Equipped with the Proper Features** Burn Barrels must be made of all-metal construction in good condition (no rust on the sides or bottom) and properly ventilated with three evenly-spaced, three-inch square vents spaced evenly around the rim near ground level. Each vent must be backed by a metal screen. A Burn Barrel must have a metal top screen with mesh size of one-fourth inch or finer to keep sparks from escaping and potentially sparking a wildfire. When burning, layer the different types of debris and stir often. Be careful of sparks escaping the barrel when you stir it.
- **Remain With your Fire** Stay with your fire until it is completely out. To ensure the fire has been completely extinguished, drown the fire with water, turn over the ashes with a shovel and drown it again. Repeat several times. Check the burn area regularly over the next several days and up to several weeks following the burn, especially if the weather is warm, dry, and windy.
- **Keep it Legal** It is illegal to burn plastic, tires, and most other waste products not from a tree or shrub.

Here are some other things to consider.

Be sure chains and other metal parts aren't dragging from your vehicle - they throw sparks.

Check your tire pressure - driving on an exposed wheel rim can cause sparks. Be careful driving through or parking on dry grass. Hot exhaust pipes can start the grass on fire. Never let your brake pads wear too thin; metal on metal makes sparks.

Sparks from lawnmowers and power equipment **DO** start wildfires. Be careful on hot, dry days, and be sure to get your equipment checked regularly.

Charcoal briquettes and ash from woodstoves/ fireplaces also can start wildfires. When disposing of briquettes and ash outside, drown the charcoal and ash with lots of water; stir them, and soak again. Be sure they are out cold!

Remember that it is better **NOT** to smoke outdoors when wildfire conditions exist. If you are going to smoke and it is permitted outdoors, safe practices require at least a 3-foot clearing around the smoker. Grind out your cigarette, cigar, or pipe tobacco in the dirt. Never grind it on a stump or log. Never throw it away into the brush or leaves. It is unsafe to smoke while walking or riding a horse or trail bike because you never know where the ash will land. Use your ashtray while in your car.

Keep a fire extinguisher and water handy when working outdoors with equipment that gets hot, or involves sparks, such as welding equipment. Water down outdoor work areas in advance if possible.

Creating a 30 foot zone of fire-resistant space around your home will help prevent fires from starting near or spreading to your home. In addition, consider using fire resistant plants and landscaping that may help to protect your house from a wildfire. For more tips on how to better protect your home visit <http://www.firewise.org>.

During a Wildfire

If you are told to evacuate, **leave immediately! Do not** remain and try to protect your property. It is too late. You hinder the fire department actions and you may become trapped.

If it is necessary for you to leave, and you have time, prepare your home before you go.

Connect hoses to all outside faucets.

Close all doors and windows.

Close all indoor window covering. Drapes, shades, and window blinds should be closed.

Put a ladder up to your roof to aid firefighters in accessing your roof if needed.

Turn off propane tank

Park vehicles toward your evacuation route. In most cases that just means backing into your driveway so you can pull forward to leave quickly.

Leave gates unlocked.

Stay out of the fire area. Emergency responders need all roads available for quick response. You are in the way and obstruct their ability to protect people and property when you enter the area. Many times there are not enough resources to put up road blocks and direct traffic. **Do Not** add to the work load, **stay away.**

Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local officials.

Know how your local officials will provide warnings and information to you in an emergency.

In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.