



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### State To Temporarily Lift Open Burning Ban

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley announced today that N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross will temporarily lift the ban on open burning for all 100 counties in North Carolina at 5 p.m. today. Recent rains across the state, while not ending the drought, are sufficient to make carefully tended open burning safe to reduce the amount of dry forest debris and cut the potential for larger, more intense and harder-to-control fires later in the year, especially during the spring fire season.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its Division of Forest Resources will continue weekly monitoring of conditions to determine if the burn ban needs to be reinstated. The ban on open burning could be reinstated if the potential for wildfire activity increases because the state continues to receive below normal rainfall coupled with above average temperatures and increased wildfire activity. During the last seven days, statewide rainfall totals ranged from about a quarter of an inch in a few coastal areas to as much as 3 inches in the Piedmont and foothills, according to the National Weather Service.

The ban on open burning was imposed Oct. 15 because of dry weather and depleted water resources across the state. The decision to lift the ban later today comes at the recommendation of the N.C. Division of Forest Resources, which fights wildfires and regularly measures the factors such as weather and available fuels that play an important role in the likelihood of experiencing dangerous wildfires.

DENR Secretary Ross and state forestry officials determined that the state had received adequate rainfall to significantly reduce the danger of wildfires. In addition, lifting the burn ban will enable people to conduct burning under controlled conditions as a way to reduce the buildup of vegetation that can fuel future wildfires.

Ross recommended temporarily lifting the ban to:

- Reduce built-up fuel loads. Unless those are reduced, there is a potential of larger, more intense, harder-to-control fires later in the year, especially during the spring fire season.
- Allow the personnel of the state Division of Forest Resources or local firefighters to focus on other important responsibilities when the risk, as it is now, is low for wildfires. During a burn ban, these officials must respond to every smoke report.
- Allow those around the state who need to do open burning for research and other permitted purposes to do so.

State forestry officials say that if people burn leaves and other vegetative materials they should take the same precautions they would have if it had not rained because fires can easily escape and become dangerous. Some important rules to follow if you burn include:

- Open burning may include burning leaves, branches and other plant material. It is illegal to burn trash, lumber, tires, newspapers, plastics or other non-vegetative materials.
- Outdoor burning is prohibited in areas covered by Code Orange or Code Red air quality forecasts.
- Make sure you have a valid burning permit. You can obtain a burning permit at any NCDFR office or permitting agent or online at [www.dfr.state.nc.us](http://www.dfr.state.nc.us).
- Follow local laws on debris burning. Some communities allow burning only during specified hours; others forbid it entirely. Check the weather.
- Don't burn on dry, windy days.
- Be prepared before burning. Keep fire tools available. To control a fire, you will need a garden hose, a bucket, a steel rake and a shovel for tossing dirt on the fire. Never use kerosene, gasoline, diesel fuel or other flammable liquids to speed burning.
- Always stay with the fire until it has been extinguished.

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