

Arizona State Forestry Division

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Scott Hunt
State Forester

Office of the State Forester
1110 W. Washington St., Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602) 771-1400



For more information contact Cam Hunter
Deputy State Forester, Arizona State Forestry Division
602-771-1416 Mobile 602-463-8291 camhunter@azsf.gov
<http://twitter.com/azstateforestry>
<http://wildlandfire.az.gov/> www.azsf.gov/

Press Release

Arizona Wildfire Awareness Week

Week of March 27 – April 2, 2011

Theme: “*Where We Live, How We Live...Living with Wildfire in the Southwest*”

Governor Jan Brewer has proclaimed the week of March 27th through April 2nd “Wildfire Awareness Week” in Arizona. The theme for the observation this year is “*Where We Live, How We Live; Living with Wildfire in the Southwest.*”

Southern Arizona has already experienced a number of wildfires due to dryer, warmer conditions. The threat of wildland fire will continue to increase into the central and northern parts of the state this spring and summer as Arizona’s forest and desert vegetation dries out. *Windy conditions* are capable of driving a fire to hundreds or thousands of acres in a short period of time.

Some wildfires can be beneficial to the landscape. In other cases, especially where communities have expanded into the wildland, fire is more of a threat and may negatively impact the health and safety of residents.

The theme “*Where We Live, How We Live...Living with Wildfire in the Southwest*” reflects not only the benefits and the danger of wildfire, but the fact that citizens can take actions to reduce fire risk.

More than half of all wildland fires in Arizona are human-caused. Many start along our roadsides as a result of discarded cigarettes, dragging chains on vehicles pulling trailers, and car fires, for example. Other human-caused fires stem from unattended campfires, debris burning, and power tools such as welders and chainsaws, which emit sparks. There are also weather-related causes of wildfire, including lightning.

State Forester Scott Hunt says Arizona’s fire season is just starting to get underway. “There is still time for homeowners to inventory their property for fire hazards and take action to reduce wildfire risk. Clearing combustible vegetation is one example of what citizens can do to make a

difference and reduce the potential for loss of life and property due to wildland fire.”

Here are some additional actions for homeowners and visitors to Arizona’s roadways and natural resources -

Homeowners – especially those in the [wildland urban interface](#):

- Create a 30-foot defensible space zone around the home
- Prune trees near structures and remove excess ground fuels such as fallen needles, cones and branches
- Pile firewood and other flammables well away from home and other structures
- Keep access roads free of debris and vegetation to improve access and escape in case of fire
- Clean debris from roofs and gutters
- Consider constructing or renovating with fire resistant building materials

Before heading out to enjoy Arizona’s natural resources:

- Check for fire restrictions at www.publiclands.org/firenews/AZ.php
- Be alert to weather conditions – a [Red Flag Warning](#) means that critical fire weather conditions are either occurring now or will shortly. A combination of strong winds, low relative humidity and warm temperatures will create explosive fire-growth potential.
- Use caution with power tools such as welders and chainsaws
- Build campfires only in approved areas such as established campgrounds; bring plenty of water
- Never leave a campfire unattended; be sure it is out and cold to the touch before leaving
- Never park vehicles in tall grass or shrubs where a hot catalytic converter might come in contact with dry vegetation and touch off a fire
- Never toss lit cigarettes out of cars
- Never use fireworks on State Trust Land, in forests or on any public lands where they are prohibited

For more information on wildfire prevention and living with wildfire, log on to www.wildlandfire.az.gov or www.firewise.org.

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