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**RETURN TO NEWSROOM**

 Media Contact, Tom Womack, PIO  
 Tenn. Dept. of Agriculture  
 Ellington Ag Center, Nashville, TN 37204  
 (615) 837-5118, Fax: (615) 837-5333  
 Tom.Womack@state.tn.us

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
 STATE OF TENNESSEE  
 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**CONTACT: Tom Womack**  
**(615) 837-5118 (office)**  
[Tom.Womack@State.TN.US](mailto:Tom.Womack@State.TN.US)  
 or Tim Phelps, Forestry  
**(615) 837-5543**  
[Tim.R.Phelps@state.tn.us](mailto:Tim.R.Phelps@state.tn.us)
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 24, 2007**
**Unusually Dry Spring Prompts Fire Safety Message**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Officials with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry are urging citizens to use precaution and common sense when burning outdoors, even though wildfire season officially ended May 15 for the summer season.

“With Tennessee’s wildfire season officially behind us, the state is still experiencing conditions conducive to the severe outbreak of fire,” said state information and education forester Tim Phelps. “While open-air burning permits are not currently required, extreme caution and conservative judgment should be used when conducting any outdoor burning.”

While open-air burning permits are not currently required by the Division of Forestry, only from Oct. 15 through May 15 each year, citizens should check for local restrictions or burn ordinances issued by municipalities.

Even under ideal weather conditions, Phelps says there are basic safety precautions to follow when burning outdoors:

- Select a proper location away from steep slopes, forested or dry, uncut grassy areas,
- Establish a control line around your fire, down to bare dirt, before you burn,
- Notify neighbors before you burn,
- Have tools on hand such as a leaf rake and garden hose to control your fire,
- Watch for changing weather conditions as winds can blow your fire in the wrong direction,
- Stay with your fire until it is completely out; it is illegal to leave an open fire unattended.

Citizens can find helpful tips on safe debris burning, as well as up-to-date wildfire information, on the Division of Forestry’s Web site at [www.BurnSafeTN.org](http://www.BurnSafeTN.org).

According to the National Weather Service, many locations across Tennessee are running

eight to 12 inches below normal for rain so far this year, and relief does not appear to be in sight through the Memorial Day weekend and into next week.

According to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, limiting open burning is also an important element to improving air quality, and there are items such as tires and rubber products, certain building materials and household trash that are illegal to burn at any time during the year. For more information on what may and may not be burned, an online brochure is available at [www.tdec.net/apc/pdf/OpenBurningBrochure.pdf](http://www.tdec.net/apc/pdf/OpenBurningBrochure.pdf).

Since January, state Forestry Division officials have recorded 1,891 wildfires in Tennessee that burned more than 28,000 acres of forestland, making it one of the worst spring wildfire seasons on record.

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Department of Agriculture  
Ellington Agricultural Center  
Nashville, TN 37204  
615.837.5103