



## Marion County Board of County Commissioners

### Fire Rescue

2631 SE Third St.  
Ocala, FL 34471  
Phone: 352-291-8000  
Fax: 352-291-8098

Contact: Miranda Iglesias, Public Information Officer, Fire Rescue  
Office: 352-291-8094 ▪ Pager: 352-898-3570 ▪ E-mail: [miranda.iglesias@marioncountyfl.org](mailto:miranda.iglesias@marioncountyfl.org)

## WILDLAND TASK FORCE EXTENDS VOLUNTARY BURN BAN Immediate Release

**MARION COUNTY, Fla.** (May 9, 2010) –With dry conditions persisting and summer lightning storms on the horizon, the Marion County Multi-Agency Wildland Task Force met Monday morning to discuss potential hazards and concerns for the 2011 wildfire season. The average drought index, based on a scale from 0 to 800, is 505 in Marion County; any number above 500 is considered in the wildfire danger zone. The drought index, coupled with lightning, has prompted fire officials to extend the voluntary burn ban that was issued in December 2010. Even scattered showers will not provide the necessary moisture to reduce the current wildfire threats, so the voluntary burn ban will remain in effect until Marion County receives significant rainfall over an extended period of time.

As an added precaution, Marion County Fire Rescue is “dual-dispatching” units, meaning dispatchers will send double the amount of firefighting resources to wildfires. The idea: commit a large amount of resources to wildfires to keep them small. Department of Forestry units also immediately respond in a coordinated, unified effort to wildfire threats. Forestry helicopters fly daily to monitor smoke plumes and reported smoke sightings in Marion County.

Firefighters urge citizens to follow these safety tips:

- Voluntarily delay any outside burning until Marion County receives significant rainfall over an extended period of time.
- Take yard debris to the Marion County landfill or recycling centers, a safer alternative to backyard burning. Call Marion County Solid Waste at 352-671-8465 for more information.
- Immediately report any suspicious activity to law enforcement.
- Use vehicle ashtrays instead of throwing cigarette butts out the window.
- Use caution when mowing or working with other equipment that could spark.

The Marion County Multi-Agency Wildland Task Force formed shortly before the unprecedented 1998 wildfire season. Firefighters and other public safety professionals from local city, county, state and federal agencies meet on a routine basis to discuss wildfire conditions, call load, manpower capabilities, wildfire tactics and public education campaigns. While wildfires have devastated many Florida counties, Marion County has remained relatively wildfire-free thanks, in part, to the cooperative efforts of the task force.

Though the task force cannot implement a mandatory burn ban, it can make recommendations to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners, which implemented mandatory burn bans in 2009, 2008 and 2007. For more information about Marion County Fire Rescue visit <http://www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm>. For more information on current wildfire conditions, visit <http://fl-dof.com/> and click on the “Wildfire Information” link.

###

*“Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations”*