



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

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MANDATORY BURN BAN ISSUED FOR MARION COUNTY

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (May 31, 2011) – The Marion County Multi-Agency Wildland Task Force on Tuesday unanimously recommended a mandatory burn ban for Marion County. Marion County Commission Chairman Stan McClain approved and signed the emergency declaration, making the burn ban effective as of 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 31, 2011.

The burn ban prohibits all outdoor burning, excluding attended and monitored barbecue and cooking equipment. The burn ban also prohibits the sale, allocation and use or discharge of fireworks or sparklers. Citizens caught in violation of the ban could face fines. However, commercial burners may still be eligible for a burn permit on a case-by-case basis pending on-site inspections from the Florida Division of Forestry and/or Marion County Fire Rescue. For more information, citizens should call the Division of Forestry at 352-955-2010 or Marion County Fire Rescue 352-291-8000.

The average drought index, based on a scale from 0 to 800, is 609 in Marion County. Any number above 500 is considered in the wildfire danger zone. The drought index, combined with lack of rainfall, dry weather, low humidity and gusting wind prompted the task force to take action.

Meanwhile, firefighters urge citizens to follow these safety tips:

- Delay outside burning until the mandatory burn ban is lifted.
- Take yard debris to Marion County’s landfill or recycling centers, a safer alternative to backyard burning. Citizens should call 352-671-8465 for more information.
- Immediately report arson or other 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.
- If you spot a fire or large column of smoke, call 911.

The Marion County Multi-Agency Wildland Task Force formed shortly before the unprecedented 1998 wildfire season. Over the last decade, firefighters and other public safety professionals from local city, county, state and federal agencies have met on a routine basis to discuss wildfire conditions, call load, manpower capabilities, wildfire tactics and public education campaigns.

The task force will meet frequently and keep citizens informed about any changes in wildfire conditions.

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“Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations”