



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, Marion County Fire Rescue
Office: 352-291-8094 ▪ Pager: 352-898-3570 ▪ E-mail: miranda.iglesias@marioncountyfl.org

TASK FORCE WILL RECOMMEND EXTENDING BURN BAN, TO RE-EVALUATE ON THURSDAY

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (June 27, 2011) – Due to recent rainfall, Wildland Task Force members met this morning to discuss dry conditions and wildfire danger in Marion County. The Wildland Task Force will recommend the commission extend the burn ban for one more week because of severe drought conditions across Marion County and unpredictable weather patterns. On Thursday, Wildland Task Force members will re-evaluate weather conditions and discuss the possibility of lifting the burn ban.

The burn ban prohibits campfires and all open burning, excluding attended and monitored barbeque and cooking equipment. The burn ban also prohibits the use, ignition or discharge of any type of explosive compounds, fireworks, flares or sparklers. If citizens are caught violating the burn ban, they could face a second degree misdemeanor charge, fines and suppression costs. However, commercial burners may still be eligible for a burn permit on a case by case basis pending onsite 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 currently 507 in Marion County. Any number above 500 is considered a wildfire danger zone. The drought index coupled with lack of rainfall, dry weather, low humidity and gusting wind prompted the task force to take action. As an alternative to outdoor burning, Marion County residents may take up to two cubic yards of debris (leaves, scrub clippings and small branches) to the Marion County landfill or recycling centers for free.

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; don’t throw 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.
- For more information about the burn ban, visit www.marioncountyfl.org .

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 Wildland Task Force makes recommendations, to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners to implement mandatory burn bans based on participating agencies’ feedback.

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