



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

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TASK FORCE WILL RECOMMEND COMMISSION EXTENDS MANDATORY BURN BAN

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (June 6, 2011) – The Marion County Multi-Agency Wildland Task Force decided unanimously this morning to recommend extending Marion County’s mandatory burn ban. The Marion County Board of County Commissioners will ratify last week’s emergency order and discuss extending the mandatory burn ban at their regularly scheduled meeting tomorrow at 6 p.m.

The burn ban prohibits all outdoor burning, excluding attended and monitored barbeque and cooking equipment. The burn ban also prohibits the sale, allocation and use or discharge of fireworks or sparklers. If citizens are caught burning, they could face fines and other consequences. 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 at 352-291-8000.

The average drought index, based on a scale from 0 to 800, is 646 in Marion County. Any number above 500 is considered the 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 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 Wildland Task Force makes recommendations to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners to implement mandatory burn bans based on participating agencies’ feedback. ###

“Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations”