



News Release

3821 West Roosevelt Road
Little Rock, AR 72204

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Christina Fowler, (501) 296-1937, christina.fowler@arkansas.gov.

SEAT Contract Activated Early Due to Increased Fire Activity

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. – Beginning Tuesday, two Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATS) will be available for water drops on wildfires in Arkansas. The Arkansas Forestry Commission has activated its SEAT contract early due to increased fire activity in portions of central and southern Arkansas.

The Arkansas Forestry Commission responded to 32 fires over the weekend, including a 155-acre fire in Hempstead County and a 100-acre fire in Calhoun County. Since July 1, AFC personnel across the state have responded to 122 fires that burned more than 5,676 acres. According to the Arkansas Forestry Commission Dispatch Center in Malvern, six counties are currently under burn bans: Cleveland, Jefferson, Lincoln, Nevada, Polk and Sebastian.

With more than half of the state in moderate to high fire danger status and little significant rainfall in sight, Arkansas residents living in forested areas should begin taking measures to protect their homes from wildfire. Even the smallest steps taken can lead to a huge advantage in ensuring your home will remain standing.

With a high fire danger risk, there are a few things to remember:

- Burning is strongly discouraged. This is especially true on days where humidity levels have dropped below 30 percent and winds are gusty. Fires can spread quickly in these conditions.
- Never discard cigarettes from vehicles.
- Never park vehicles where grass or other vegetation can touch the exhaust system.

Arkansas FireWise Coordinator David Samuel recommends homeowners create a minimum 30-foot “defensible space” around their house. Defensible space is an area around a structure that provides an opportunity to modify the existing vegetation to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire.

Homeowners should thin flammable trees, such as pine, near their home and remove undergrowth that can serve as a link for grass fire to reach treetops. Also, be sure to remove dead leaves and pine needles from roofs, gutters and along the base of your home.

Other suggestions include:

- Keep trees and shrubs pruned. Prune all trees from six to 10 feet above the ground.
- Remove overhanging branches from your roof.
- Mow your yard regularly.
- Store firewood away from the house.
- Dispose of cutting and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Homeowners should use 1/8-inch screen to cover open areas underneath decks. This prevents embers from igniting vegetation beneath the deck, which can in turn ignite the structure.

For more tips on Firewise landscaping and construction, visit www.arkansasfirewise.com. To view current burn bans and wildfire danger ratings, visit www.forestry.state.ar.us. To report a wildfire, call the Arkansas Forestry Commission Dispatch Center at 1-800-468-8834, or 911.

#

The Arkansas Forestry Commission offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Arkansas FireWise is a program of the Arkansas Forestry Commission, that works closely with Firewise Communities/USA. Firewise Communities/USA is a part of the National Firewise Communities Program, an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program includes Firewise Communities workshops, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. The National Firewise Communities Program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, state forestry organizations, the US Fire Administration, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.