



News Release

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GEORGIA'S WILDFIRE SEASON OFF TO BUSY START

Georgia's wildfire season is getting off to an exceptionally busy start, with more than 300 fires burning close to 2,000 acres in the first week of March alone.

"The number one cause of wildfire is debris burning that gets out of control," said Alan Dozier, Chief of Forest Protection with the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). "Unfortunately, we suspect arson is the cause of some of the fires GFC Rangers have been battling this month."

The Georgia Forestry Commission is charged with protecting life, property and forests from wildfire and all GFC resources are currently on alert until rain brings some relief. Georgia's fire season runs from February through April, with most fires occurring in March. According to Dozier, low humidity and windy conditions contribute to the increased risk of wildfire. Two homes in Dawson and Ware counties were lost to wildfires on March 7.

Georgia Forestry Commission Rangers have been fighting a particularly difficult fire in Dade County, Georgia on Windy Mountain that is threatening I-24 west of Chattanooga, TN. On March 8, the western flank of the 300-acre fire remained uncontained in steep and rocky terrain. Georgia and Tennessee authorities are sharing results of their investigations into the fire, which is thought to have been caused by an arsonist. "Arson fires put everyone at risk," said Dozier. "Report any suspicious fire activity to your local GFC office. And if you plan to burn debris on your property, be sure to get a permit." Residents seeking a burn permit should call 1-877-OK-2-BURN, or visit the GFC website at www.gatrees.org. Callers are provided information on appropriate weather conditions for burning and can receive their permit by phone.

Dozier said it is also important for residents to properly prepare their property before burning. Fire locations should not be close to wooded areas or other flammable objects. Raking, roto-tilling or watering down the surrounding area is advised, and a hose should be kept handy. More fire prevention tips can be found at www.gatrees.org under Forest Fire/Wildfire Prevention.

"GFC Rangers put their lives on the line when they battle these fires," said Dozier. "We need the public's help in preventing them during this busy fire season."

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