



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY



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**THE THREAT OF WILDFIRES IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

“The combination of high temperatures and warm breezes, following a very dry period, creates a recipe for the increased risk of brush and forest fires,” says Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Acting Director Kurt Schwartz. Wildfires often begin unnoticed, but spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. There are three different classes of wild fires. A ‘surface fire’ is the most common type, burning along the forest floor, moving slowly and killing or damaging trees. A ‘ground fire’, usually started by lightning, burns on or below the forest floor. ‘Crown fires’ spread rapidly by the wind, moving quickly by jumping along the treetops. Because 80% of forest fires are started by negligent human behavior, such as smoking in forested areas or improperly extinguishing campfires most are preventable.

The Public is urged to obey all burning regulations set in place by Public Safety officials.

**Tips for Campers**

- Use extreme caution with disposal of smoking materials, cooking coals, and campfires.
- Maintain at least a 3’ clear area free from leaves, dry grass, pine needles, etc. around grills, fireplaces and tents.
- Handle flammable liquids with care, storing them only in metal containers, using them only for their intended use.
- Fill lanterns and stoves a safe distance downwind from sources of heat or open flames.
- Make sure that barbeque stands/portable stoves are level and sturdy.
- Keep a water container nearby when coals/campfires are burning.
- When cooking is over, soak the coals/fires to prevent re-ignition.
- Pitch your tent at least 15’ upwind from grills and fireplaces.
- Only use battery-operated lights in or near tents or campers.

**Year-round Tips for Property Owners to Help Prevent Wildfires**

- Keep lawns trimmed, leaves raked.
- Roof and rain gutters should be debris-free to prevent burning embers from a wildfire igniting your home.
- Compost or chip vegetative debris piles.

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- Stack firewood at least 30' away from structures.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home, at least 30' away from structures and wooden fences.
- Make sure water sources, such as hydrants, ponds, swimming pools and wells are accessible for fire suppression.
- Check the spark arresters on your combustible engines in equipment, such as lawn mowers, ATVs, dirt bikes and chainsaws.
- Use fire resistant, protective roofing and materials like stone, brick and metal to protect your home.
- Install multi-pane windows, tempered safety glass or fireproof shutters to protect large windows from radiant heat.
- Have chimneys, wood stoves and all home heating systems inspected and cleaned annually by a certified specialist.
- Remove branches hanging above and around chimneys.
- Create at least a 10' clearing around an incinerator before burning debris.
- Have a fire extinguisher or garden hose on hand when burning debris.

### **Tips for Property Owners during Wildfire Season**

- If advised by Public Safety officials to evacuate, do so immediately. Closely monitor the potential for Wildfires in your area through the Media.
- When leaving, shut off gas at the meter and turn off pilot lights.
- Open fireplace damper, closing the fireplace screen.
- Close windows, vents, doors, blinds, or non-combustible window coverings and heavy drapes, removing flammable drapes and curtains.
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home, away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
- Close all interior doors and windows to prevent drafts.
- Place valuables that will not be damaged by water into a pool or pond.
- Gather your pets into one room, making plans to care for your pets if you must evacuate.
- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut doors and roll up windows. Leave the keys in the ignition and the car doors unlocked. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked.
- Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Place combustible patio/yard furniture indoors.
- Connect garden hose to outside taps. Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near aboveground fuel tanks. Wet your roof.
- Wet or remove shrubs within 15' of the house.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA, go to [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema). Continue to follow information from MEMA on *Facebook* and *Twitter*.