



MEDIA ADVISORY

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27 October 2016

Over 1,000 Wildfires Since October 1st – Dry Conditions Worsen as ‘No Burn’ Remains In Effect for Much of Alabama

Since the first of October, a total of 1,028 wildfires have destroyed 11,232 acres across the state of Alabama. And the situation is only getting worse as there is no rain in sight. Today, Governor Robert Bentley, appealed to citizens regarding the seriousness of the situation at the site of a recent wildfire in Walker County. Earlier this month he signed a Drought Emergency Declaration into effect, often referred to as a “No Burn Order,” which prohibits ALL outdoor burning.

A total of **46 counties in north and central Alabama** remain under the burn ban. Effective since October 12, the order prohibits all outdoor burning. It is illegal for any person to set fire to any forest, grass, woods, wildlands, or marshes; to build a campfire or bonfire; or to burn trash, debris, or other material that may cause a forest, grass, or woods fire. The regulation also prohibits all open burning and prescribed burns. If convicted, the penalty for violating the No Burn Order is a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to six months in jail.

Additionally, a ‘Fire Alert’ remains in effect for the **21 other counties in south Alabama**. While under the Fire Alert, permits for outdoor burning are restricted.

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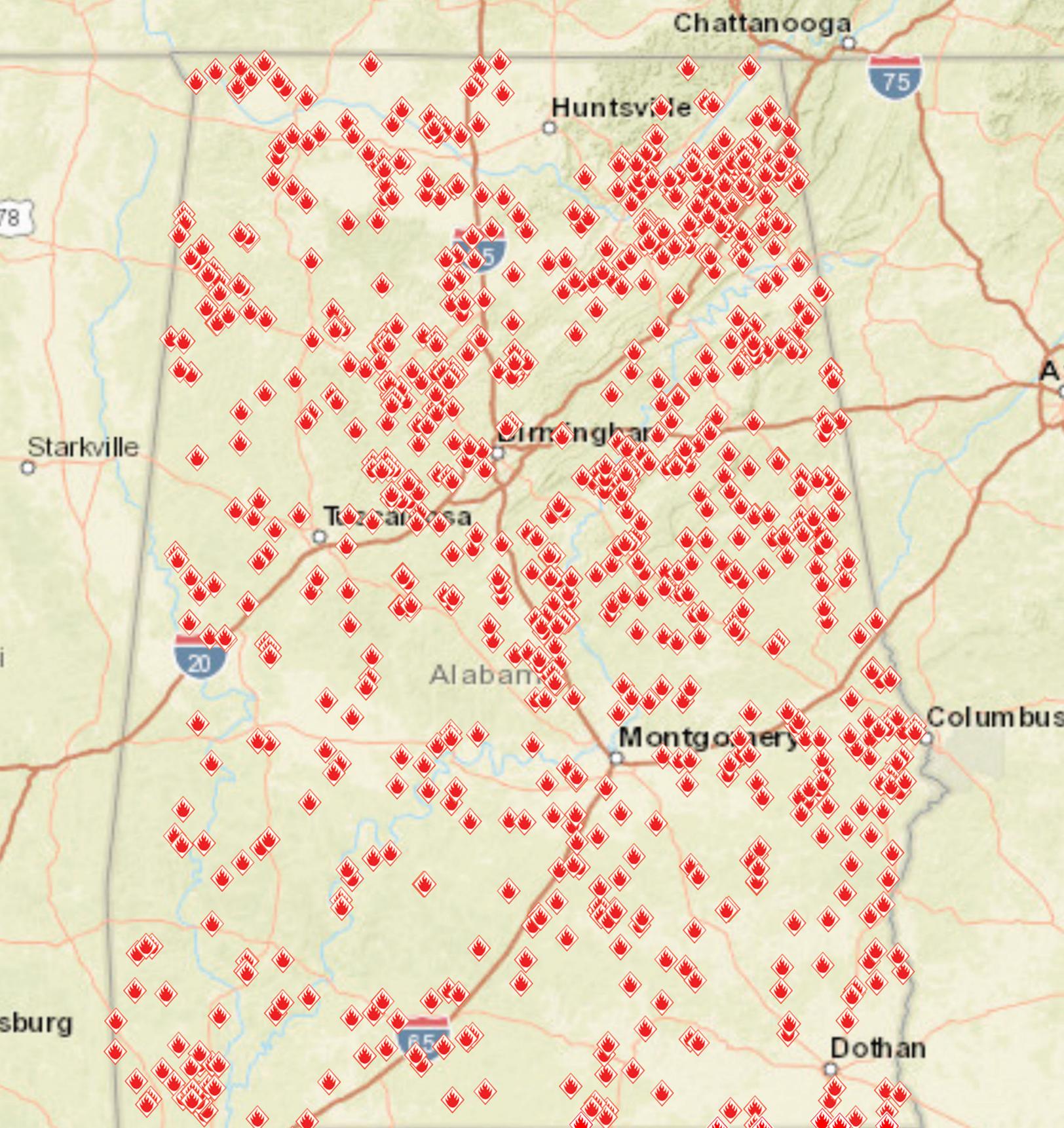
Over 1,000 Wildfires Since October 1st – *(continued)*

The Alabama Forestry Commission is committed to protecting the state's invaluable forest assets, as well as serving the citizens and landowners across Alabama. The Drought Emergency Declaration order will remain in effect until rescinded by the State Forester, at which time conditions will have changed sufficiently to reduce the occurrence and frequency of wildfires. To report persons burning in violation of this law, contact your local law enforcement.

Current wildfire numbers are available at any time on the AFC website – whether for the whole state or by particular county – at www.forestry.alabama.gov . Click on the top button on the left 'Fire in the Woods' then select 'Fire Reports' for all the stats. For a particular time period, select 'Fires by Date Range' in red text on the right, just under the map.

- Yesterday: 41 wildfires burned 486 acres.
- For the last 30 days: 1,123 wildfires have burned 12,151 acres.
- YTD: 2,455 wildfires have burned 31,293 acres.

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October 1-26, 2016
1,028 Wildfires
11,232 Acres Burned





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT IS A DROUGHT EMERGENCY DECLARATION?

Section 9-13-141 of the Code of Alabama states: "at such time as the state forestry commission has declared by regulation a drought emergency in any county or counties, it shall be unlawful in such county or counties for any person to set fire to any forest, grass, woods, wildlands or marshes or to build a campfire or bonfire or to burn trash or other material that may cause a forest, grass or woods fire."

Specifically, the regulation prohibits any prescribed burns, any campfire or bonfire, any trash or debris fires, or any other open burning.

DO THE REGULATIONS COVER BARBEQUES?

The regulations allow barbeque fires for cooking IF the fire is in a grill or masonry barbeque pit, including large barbeque pits used by civic organizations to prepare food. Anyone grilling or barbequing during the Drought Emergency should have water hoses on site to prevent any loose sparks from setting a wildfire, and a circle at least 10 feet wide around the grill should be cleared of any burnable material. Side fires to generate coals for a barbeque must also be within a grill or masonry pit. Gas grills are allowed.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE "CAMPFIRE OR BONFIRE" PROHIBITION?

Campfires or bonfires include any fire that is burned on bare ground, even if surrounded by stones or a metal fire ring. This definition includes campfires, ceremonial fires, 'council' fires, bonfires, 'warming' fires, and cooking fires that are on bare ground and not in a masonry lined 'pit.'

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE "TRASH OR DEBRIS FIRE" PROHIBITION?

Trash and debris fires include burning of woody debris, yard waste, garbage, construction debris or any other material, in either an open pit or in a barrel. At this time, people should not burn a debris pile until the Drought Emergency is lifted.

– more –

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WHAT OTHER THINGS ARE INCLUDED IN THE DROUGHT EMERGENCY?

The intent of the Drought Emergency Declaration is to prevent catastrophic wildfires during drought conditions. No one should use an open flame in or around a woodland setting. At campsites, closed lanterns may be used, but no open flames such as candles or 'tiki' torches. Care should also be exercised in suburban areas where lawns are very dry as well.

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING THESE REGULATIONS?

Under Section 9-13-142, Code of Alabama, anyone found guilty of violating these regulations and improperly conducting open burning in a Drought Emergency-declared area shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not less than \$250, nor more than \$500, and at the discretion of the court, that person may also be sentenced to the county jail for up to six months.

Additionally, any person burning in violation of the Drought Emergency Declaration will be liable for damages to the property of another and any costs associated with the suppression of said fire. Suppression costs would include equipment and personnel costs related to control or extinguish the wildfire.

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Additional Resources:

Fire Warning Definitions: www.forestry.alabama.gov/FireWarningDesc.aspx

U.S. Drought Monitor: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?AL>