

Wildfire Potential Increases During Spring

From late March through May...depending on weather patterns and conditions...warm season grasses begin to green up. Before they become fully green though they are susceptible to catching fire easily.

In addition...it is common in rural areas for people to rid their yards of tree and grass litter and burn them in small piles. If they are not mindful of conditions...they can create a dangerous situation with embers that carry and spread fire.

These hazards can be lessened with a little planning and information.



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Before you do any burning of yard waste or outdoor activities that may include starting a fire...check your local forecasts for any elevation of fire risk.

If windy or excessively dry conditions will exist during your planned burns...consider waiting until the elevated fire risk is gone.



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When burning remember that the embers created by your fire can be carried by wind to nearby ditches, tree stands or grassy fields and start wildfires.

Dry and breezy conditions can spread these fires at a rapid rate.

It is always a good idea to have a water source right by the location where you plan to do any burning.



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Fire Departments are then tasked with putting out these kinds of fires could hold you responsible for the cost of putting the fire out if they can show your negligence.



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The National Weather Service website can give you current and forecast conditions as well as alerting you to the potential for fire danger. Check the fire weather planning forecast before you burn.

If a fire weather watch is in effect...consider changing or delaying your plans.

If a red flag warning is in effect...do not burn.



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A fire weather watch is issued when a combination of wind speeds greater than 25 mph and relative humidity less than 25 % are forecast from 24 to 72 hours out.

If a fire weather watch is in effect for your area use caution when starting fires or harvesting. You may even want to consider changing your plans or having alternate plans in place.



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A Red Flag Warning is issued when a combination of dry fuels and specific weather conditions are either imminent or there is a high confidence level from the fire weather forecaster that conditions will occur within the next 24 hours.

Fuels in central Iowa are mainly native grasses and ditch grasses but can include stands of trees and crop stubble.

Weather conditions that are forecast or occurring that cause extreme fire growth are wind speeds greater than 25 mph along with relative humidity less than 25 %.



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In Summary:

- Check the weather service website at www.weather.gov/dmx for the latest conditions and forecasts and to see whether there are any notifications for enhanced fire danger.
- Heed fire weather watches and especially red flag warnings.



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