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RETURN TO NEWSROOM

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Governor Bredesen Urges July 4th Fire Safety

State Fire Marshal, Forestry Division Join Forces

Nashville - In anticipation of Independence Day celebrations next week, Governor Phil Bredesen is urging the public to refrain from outdoor burning and home fireworks displays in areas of the state where extremely dry conditions exist.

"We want people to enjoy and celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, but we want them to be safe, not sorry," said Bredesen. "Even with a few scattered showers, conditions in many areas of the state are such that we're asking citizens to simply use common sense when dealing with fire and fireworks."

"I know the approaching holiday and dry conditions are of concern to many local officials and firefighters, who have had to respond to brush fires over the last few weeks. I want to support them in letting the public know about the increased risk of the fire danger."

The state Fire Marshal's Office and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) Division of Forestry are joining efforts in raising public awareness of outdoor burning and fireworks safety.

"It's important that the public be aware of the potential for extremely dry conditions in their area and to check for local restrictions on outdoor burning or use of fireworks," said State Forester Steve Scott. "We're working with local fire agencies and others to get the word out about fire safety to the public throughout the Fourth of July holiday and as long as dry conditions exist."

State Fire Marshal, Leslie A. Newman, encourages all Tennesseans to attend professional fireworks displays as an alternative to consumer fireworks. "Displays performed by trained professionals are regulated more closely and follow national safety standards. By avoiding consumer fireworks the risk of personal injury, including burns and damage to ones fingers, face, and eyes, is greatly reduced."

Division of Forestry employees are also visiting public places and local fireworks stands, in areas where they are legal, to provide operators and their customers with fireworks and fire safety information.

Even under ideal conditions, state officials say fireworks safety is important and recommend the following:

- Use fireworks outdoors and in a safe area well away from dry grass, outbuildings, fields or forests
- Carefully follow directions and always have adult supervision
- Light one firework at a time on a sturdy surface and move away quickly
- Never point or throw fireworks at people or animals
- Keep a bucket of water, wet towels and a garden hose nearby
- Discard used fireworks

Many municipalities have ordinances that restrict or require permitting for fire activity, so citizens should check with local authorities before conducting any open, outdoor burning. In areas close to woodlands, grasslands or forestlands, forestry officials recommend that you postpone any outdoor burning until conditions improve.

Even under ideal weather conditions, state forestry officials say that following basic fire safety tips can mean the difference between a successful debris burn and tragedy. They recommend:

- Selecting a proper location away from steep slopes, forested or dry, uncut grassy areas
- Establishing a control line around your fire, down to bare soil, before you burn
- Notifying neighbors before burning
- Having tools on hand such as a leaf rake and garden hose to control your fire
- Watching for changing weather conditions as winds can blow your fire in the wrong direction
- And, staying with your fire until it is completely out. It is illegal to leave an open fire unattended.

The TDA Division of Forestry has a new Web site that provides wildland fire information and safety tips for outdoor burning and fireworks at www.burnsafetn.org. For more information, call your local state Division of Forestry office listed in your local phone directory.

NOTE: A July 4th fire safety PSA featuring Governor Bredesen is available for FTP download by contacting Lydia Lenker at 615-741-3763.

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