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RETURN TO NEWSROOM

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MEDIA RELEASE
 STATE OF TENNESSEE
 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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**TDA OBSERVES NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION WEEK BY
 REMINDING CITIZENS TO BURN SAFE**
-TDA's Division of Forestry begins requiring burn permits October 15-

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry is observing National Fire Prevention Week starting October 5, by reminding homeowners to burn safe to prevent forest fires. The official beginning of forest fire season in Tennessee is October 15.

“Because of the dry conditions and the traditional start of fire season, it’s important that citizens call for a burning permit and follow outdoor burning safety recommendations,” said state forester Steve Scott. “Many areas of the state are very dry and the permit system helps us communicate to the public when and where it is safe to burn.”

Since most of Tennessee is experiencing abnormally dry conditions, it is important that citizens apply for a permit before burning. Burning permits are free of charge and may be obtained in advance for weekends and holidays. Permit holders should also check for other restrictions in their locale. Beginning October 15, citizens can apply for burning permits by calling their local Division of Forestry office listed in the phone directory under state government between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. A directory of state Forestry Division offices by county and fire safety tips also can be found online at www.BurnSafeTN.org.

Activities requiring a burning permit include, but are not limited to, unconfined, outdoor burning of brush and leaves, untreated wood waste and burning to clear land. Burning permits are required in most areas between October 15 and May 15.

Last year 34 homes across the state were lost and over 1,200 were threatened due to wildland fire. Homeowners living in forested communities can take steps to protect themselves and their property. Keeping gutters and rooftops free of debris, maintaining at least 2 to 5 feet of none flammable material next to the foundation of

the home and clearing away flammable brush at least 30 feet from the house are just a few simple examples of what homeowners can do.

“The public is a very important partner in helping us reduce the impact of wildland fire by respecting state and local restrictions, using common sense when conducting debris burning and by reporting suspicious activity that may be related to arson,” said Scott. “It’s also very important for the homeowner to recognize that they carry the first line of responsibility for the protection of their home before a fire threatens it.”

Escaped debris burns are the leading cause of wildfires. Burning without a permit is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and/or a fine not to exceed \$50. This year, 32 percent of the wildfires have been caused by arson, which is a class C felony punishable by three to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 fines. Anyone with information about suspected arson activity should call the state Fire Marshal’s Arson Hotline toll-free at 1-800-762-3017.

For more information, visit www.BurnSafeTN.org.

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