



Pennsylvania Wildfires

Remember Only You Can Prevent Wildfires



Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources
Bureau of Forestry

Wildfire

A wildfire is an unplanned, uncontrolled fire in an area of combustible vegetation.

Three elements are necessary for a wildfire to occur:

- An available fuel source, such as dried or cured grass or leaves.
- Dry conditions including low relative humidity.
- An ignition source –some way for the fire to start.

Within Pennsylvania, 99% of all wildfires are caused by people. Most wildfires are ignited unintentionally, often occurring within the Wildland-Urban Interface –the area where residences are located near or within the forest or wildlands.

As people are the cause of most wildfires, Smokey Bear’s adage that **“Only you can prevent wildfires”** rings especially true in Pennsylvania.

For More Information

If you are interested in discovering more information concerning wildfires, please contact your local forest district office.



Wildfires in Pennsylvania

The greatest danger of wildfires in Pennsylvania occurs during the spring months of March, April, and May, and the autumn months of October and November. These months provide an overabundance of opportunity for the three elements necessary for a wildfire to occur.

Every year, hundreds of wildfires burn thousands of acres of public and private lands. The economic cost to suppress these fires ranges in the millions of dollars annually. Not only do wildfires pose a financial burden to the citizens of the Commonwealth, they also endanger the life and property of residents and first responders.

The greatest cause of wildfires in Pennsylvania is debris burning.



Debris Burning

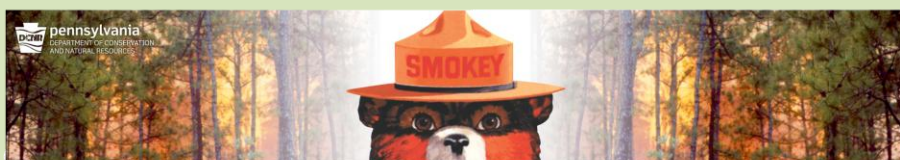
Debris burning includes the purposeful open burning of rubbish, yard waste, brush, or other residential debris. Burning debris during windy, dry weather can result in the unintentional spread of fire to adjacent vegetation. Caution must be taken when burning debris, always consider the current and forecast weather, and ensure your fire is properly extinguished when through.

Wildfire Law

Pennsylvania Statutes Title 32 § 314 provides that *“...every person causing a forest fire within this Commonwealth, directly or by the act of an agent or employe, shall be liable to the Commonwealth for all expenses incurred by the “Department” on account of such fire.”*

What this means:

If through your actions you ignite a wildfire, you are responsible for the cost of extinguishing the fire. Costs can include time and equipment expenses of volunteer fire fighters, forest fire wardens, and Bureau of Forestry personnel and other state partners, including aircraft costs. This could total thousands of dollars. Damage to other property may leave you liable to criminal charges or additional civil expenses.



Only you can prevent wildfires.