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DEC Announces Residential Brush Burning Prohibited in New York State March 16 Through May 14

Ban Reduces Wildfire Risks, Protects Lives and Property

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced the annual statewide ban prohibiting residential brush burning will begin March 16, and run through May 14. With spring approaching, DEC is reminding residents that conditions for wildfires are heightened in springtime when most wildfires occur.

"While wildfires are more visible in the western part of the country, the start of spring brings an increased risk of wildfires right here in New York," **Commissioner Seggos said.** "In an effort to protect our communities and natural resources, New York prohibits residential burning for two months starting on March 16, when dry conditions are highest. Help DEC put safety first and continue to reduce the number of wildfires in New York's communities by following the burn ban."

Even though some areas of the state remain blanketed in snow, warming temperatures can quickly cause wildfire conditions to arise. DEC will post a Fire Danger Map rating for the 2021 fire season on [DEC's website](#) once there is a moderate risk anywhere in the state.

Open burning of debris is the largest single cause of spring wildfires in New York State. When temperatures are warmer and the past fall's debris and leaves dry out, wildfires can start and spread easily and be further fueled by winds and a lack of green vegetation. In 2020, DEC Forest Rangers extinguished 192 wildfires that burned a total of more than 1,122 acres. In addition, local fire departments, many of which are volunteer, all too often have to leave their jobs and families to respond to wildfires caused by illegal debris fires.

New York first enacted strict restrictions on open burning in 2009 to help prevent wildfires and reduce air pollution. The regulations allow residential brush fires in towns with fewer than 20,000 residents during most of the year, but prohibit such burning in spring when most wildfires occur. Campfires using charcoal or untreated wood are allowed, but people

should never leave these fires unattended and must extinguish them. Burning garbage or leaves is prohibited year-round. For more information about fire safety and prevention, go to [DEC's FIREWISE New York website](#).

Some towns, primarily in and around the Adirondack and Catskill parks, are designated "fire towns." Open burning is prohibited year-round in these municipalities unless an individual or group has a permit from DEC. To find out whether a municipality is a designated fire town or to obtain a permit, contact the appropriate DEC regional office. [A list of regional offices](#) is available on DEC's website.

Forest Rangers, DEC Environmental Conservation Police Officers (ECOs), and local authorities enforce the burn ban. Violators of the State's open burning regulation are subject to criminal and civil enforcement actions, with a minimum fine of \$500 for a first offense. To report environmental law violations call 1-800-TIPP DEC (1-800-847-7332), or report online on [DEC's website](#).

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