

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

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UPDATE

SUFFOLK, VA (April 30, 2021) The Suffolk Fire Marshal's Office advises that following their investigation of the extensive brush fire that occurred on Deer Path Road on April 27, 2021, charges have been placed against the homeowner.

Battalion Chief Chris Cornwell, Fire Marshal, noted that warrants have been secured for Richard L. Hill, age 43, of Suffolk, on charges including Careless Damaging Property by Fire (Class IV Misdemeanor); Regulating the Burning of Woods, Brush, etc.; Penalties – 4 p.m. Burn Law (Class III Misdemeanor); and Deliberate or Negligent Burning (Class 1 Misdemeanor). Hill had contacted Suffolk Fire & Rescue after he was unable to extinguish a fire that he started while burning a stump on his property in the 3800 block of Deer Path Road.

The Virginia Department of Forestry estimated that approximately 40 acres of woodlands were burned during the incident. Multiple residences in the area were evacuated for approximately 5 hours, and several roadways were closed as crews from Suffolk Fire & Rescue and several other Departments and Volunteer groups that provided mutual aid worked to extinguish the spreading fire. A plane provided by the Virginia Department of Forestry dumped over 1,900 gallons of water in the affected wooded area, in addition to their plowing efforts.

Due to current weather and gusty wind conditions, the Fire Marshal's Office has instituted a ban on all open burning in the City until otherwise advised.

Further, citizens are reminded that there is no open air burning allowed from May 1st through September 30, 2021. This restriction comes from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and was also adopted as an Ordinance by Suffolk's City Council in January 2007 to improve the City's declining air quality and to reduce the number of responses for refuse, grass, brush and woodland fires.

The open burn ban includes all types of burning from burning in a barrel to commercial land clearing operations. The use of special incineration devices is also included. In Suffolk, failure to comply with the burn ban can result in a fine of up to \$2,500 and one year in jail as well as a bill for extinguishing the fire.

Citizens are encouraged to take advantage of the City of Suffolk's bulk pickup service to remove yard debris or to carry the debris to a local landfill for disposal. In cases where large quantities of debris are involved, property owners may want to consider hiring a contractor to remove the debris.

Commercial fire pits, fire bowls and chimineas are considered recreational fires by City Code and do not require a permit. Only approved materials (firewood) may be burned and the fire must be constantly attended until it is extinguished. Some method of extinguishment must be available (fire extinguisher, garden hose, etc.) for immediate utilization. The Code also states these devices shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and shall not be operated within 15 feet of a structure or combustible material. These devices are exempt from the "Summer Burn Ban"

For additional information on open burning in the City of Suffolk, go to www.suffolkva.us/open-burning-and-recreational-fires, or contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at 514-4550.

UPDATE

SUFFOLK, VA (April 27, 2021) Suffolk Fire & Rescue advises that the brush fire that initially began in the 3800 block of Deer Path Road and then extended deep into the wooded rural area has been called under control at 6:12 p.m.

Deputy Chief Ted Adams has advised that all of the residents who were initially advised to evacuate can now return to their homes.

The Virginia Department of Forestry and several Suffolk Fire & Rescue Brush Trucks will remain on scene in the event of any flare-ups. The road closures in the immediate area will be lifted once all of the responding apparatus units have been removed.

The Virginia Department of Forestry air-dropped four (4) loads of water, each totaling 475 gallons per load, to aid in firefighting efforts.

Mutual aid was also provided by the Suffolk Police Department, Virginia Beach Fire Department, York County Fire Department, Carrsville Volunteer Fire Department, and the Whaleyville Volunteer Fire Department.

There were no injuries. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

FIREFIGHTERS ON SCENE OF WORKING BRUSH FIRE DEER PATH ROAD AREA

SUFFOLK, VA (April 27, 2021) Suffolk Fire & Rescue are currently on the scene of a working brush fire in the in the rural Deer Path Road area.

Emergency Communications was contacted at 1:13 p.m. advising of the brush fire in the area of the 3800 block of Deer Path Road.

Deputy Chief Ted Adams advises that multiple units, including Engines, Brush Trucks, and Tankers, have responded to the densely wooded area, in addition to multiple units and plows from the Virginia Department of Forestry. Due to current windy and dry conditions, the fire is still moving and has jumped fire lines and has extended into the trees in several areas.

Suffolk Police and Suffolk Fire & Rescue personnel have advised citizens within the areas of 3457 to 3875 Indian Trail Road to evacuate.

The roadway in the area of Deer Path Road and Milford Lane, as well as Deer Path Road and Indian Trail are currently closed to through traffic and Suffolk Police are providing traffic control in the area. This remains a working incident at this time.

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