

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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4 PM BURN LAW BEGINS FEBRUARY 15TH

SUFFOLK, Virginia (February 7, 2012) The Suffolk Department of Fire & Rescue's Fire Prevention Bureau will enforce the Commonwealth's 4 p.m. Burn Law beginning February 15, 2012—the start of spring fire season in Virginia.

This law prohibits burning before 4:00 p.m. each day (February 15th – April 30th) if the fire is in, or within 300 feet of, woodland, brushland or fields containing dry grass or other flammable materials. After 4:00 p.m., winds usually calm down and the relative humidity levels are on the increase, both of which reduce the potential for a debris fire or any outdoor open air fire to escape your control.

A violation of this law is a Class 3 misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$500 fine. In addition to the criminal violation, those who allow a fire to escape are liable for the cost of suppressing the fire as well as any damage caused to others' property.

Suffolk's Fire Marshal, Captain James Dickens, advises that the leading cause of wildfires in Virginia is debris burning. "Carelessness with an unattended fire, a discarded cigarette or a single match can ignite dry leaves and grasses that are so prevalent in the early spring. Add a few days of dry, windy conditions and a simple yard debris fire can quickly turn into a raging inferno. The 4 p.m. Burn

Law is one of the most effective tools we have for the prevention of brush or forest fires. By adhering to the law and not burning before 4 p.m., people are less likely to start a fire that threatens them, their property or their neighbor's property."

The City of Suffolk Fire Prevention Bureau requires a burning permit for all open air burning within the city. Fire inspectors consider such factors as wind direction, proximity to other occupied dwellings, the resident's ability to control the fire, and history of complaints in a particular neighborhood before issuing a burning permit.

Captain Dickens emphasizes that the issuance of a burn permit does not relieve one of any liability. A complaint lodged by a neighbor may result in the permit being revoked and the fire being extinguished by the Fire Department. If your debris fire gets out of control and damages adjoining property, you will be responsible for all damages as well as the expenses incurred in fighting the fire.

For more information on how to protect yourself and your property, or to obtain a burn permit, contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at 757-514-4550.

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