

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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Oklahoma Prepares for Increasing Fire Danger

Fire conditions and drought are intensifying across the lower half of Oklahoma. Officials from Oklahoma Forestry Services report that the number of wildfires across the state and the region are increasing and urge the public to be very careful with outdoor activities that might spark a blaze.

“We are pre-positioning aircraft and firefighters to be ready for any new fires,” said George Geissler, Oklahoma State Forester. “We have opened a portable air tanker base at Ardmore so that heavy tankers can be closer to assist with fires in Oklahoma, as well as Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. Fire activity has definitely picked up in the four-state region.”

A CL415 bombardier super scooper arrived in Ardmore today, joining other available air resources from the Oklahoma National Guard. The Ardmore tanker base will serve as a regional asset, allowing retardant planes a quicker reload and return time as they work to battle blazes.

Low relative humidity, combined with dry fuels and gusty winds, with some gusts possible near 30 mph, are creating the dangerous conditions. This pattern is expected to repeat tomorrow as well.

“We are just asking Oklahomans to remain vigilant as we enter our winter fire season,” said Geissler. “It is really dry across Oklahoma and we are just asking everyone to do their part in preventing any new starts.”

Some of the most severe conditions are present in southeastern Oklahoma. County burn bans have been enacted by Choctaw, LeFlore and McCurtain counties which restrict outdoor burning. Burn ban information is available at <http://www.forestry.ok.gov/burn-ban-information>.

Even if your county is not under a burn ban, outdoor burning is discouraged due to the extreme conditions. Citizens are asked to report any new fires or suspicious smoke to the closest fire department. Safety of the firefighters and public is of the utmost concern and with this weather forecast one of the main threats for firefighters will be rapid spread of any fire start.

Oklahoma Forestry Services, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, is the state’s lead agency responsible for wildland fire suppression. For the latest burn ban and fire information, visit www.forestry.ok.gov.

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Cutline for attached photo: A CL415 bombardier, known as a “scooper” is stationed at the Ardmore, Okla. tanker base. This aircraft is capable of scooping 1600 gallons of water in 12 seconds from lakes to use in wildland fire suppression.



Note to Media:

For the latest Oklahoma “Daily Wildfire Situation Report” visit www.forestry.ok.gov and click the link on the homepage (green box on right hand side.) The report contains information about recent fire activity, predicted fire weather and a link for current burn bans.

