

FIREWISE FACTS

WILDFIRE

Any forest fire, brush fire, grass fire, or any other outdoor fire that is not controlled and supervised is called a wildfire. These fires cause damage to forest resources as well as wildlife habitat, water quality, and air quality. Of increasing concern is the threat wildfires pose to homes and lives in South Carolina. Wildfires burn 20-30 homes in the state every year, and hundreds more are threatened each fire season. Because these situations are becoming more common in our state, it is important for citizens and firefighters alike to understand the nature of wildfire.

FIRE SEASON

Forest fire danger is usually highest in late winter and early spring (January through mid-April). March is frequently the busiest month for firefighters, but some of the largest fires have occurred during the first two weeks of April. South Carolina's fire season is in the winter because most vegetation is dead or dormant during that time and humidity is low. Fires do not start or spread as quickly when vegetation is green. However, wildfires can happen year-round.

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDFIRE FACTS

Average number of wildfires per year: 3,000*. Considering the size and population of SC, this is one of the highest rates in the nation.

Average area burned each year: 18,000* acres.

Largest fire in recent record: A 30,000-acre blaze in Horry County in 1976.

(*) SC Forestry Commission

At the state level, considering the size and population of South Carolina, the state has one of the highest wildfire rates in the nation.

Less than 5% of SC wildfires are started by natural causes. The other 95+% are caused by people.

AIKEN COUNTY WILDFIRE FACTS

Aiken County has ranked in the top five counties of South Carolina in each the last three years for number of wildfires, and has had a similar ranking for total acres burned by wildfires. The county ranked first for acres burned one year, and twice ranked second for most wildfires in SC.

Sources: NFPA Firewise Program and SC Forestry Commission