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**Andrew M. Cuomo** - Governor

## **Governor Cuomo Urges New Yorkers to be Cautious With High Danger of Wildfires Across Western and Upstate New York**

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Albany, NY (July 13, 2012)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today urged all New Yorkers to take extra caution, as dry weather conditions have led to a heightened danger of wildfires across Upstate and Western New York. In addition, the state today will institute a statewide residential burn ban for 90 days through October 10.

"These conditions should not be taken lightly," Governor Cuomo said. "The potential for disastrous wildfires is present in all areas of the state and we must do whatever we can to prevent fires from occurring. The state will continue to closely monitor the wildfire danger and we will deploy whatever resources are necessary to protect New Yorkers should a critical situation occur."

As a result of the mild winter with relatively little snowfall, as well as areas of the state which have received only 25% of the normal spring and early summer rainfall, wildfire danger across New York is heightened. Current weather forecasts predict above normal temperatures, elevating the risk for all of Upstate and Western New York. New York City and Long Island are at moderate risk levels.

Wildfires can start easily from many types of causes and can spread rapidly and increase quickly in intensity. The Governor urged New Yorkers to take extra caution and do the following:

- Refrain from starting any type of outdoor fire and in cases where a fire must be started, take extreme caution.
- Be watchful and keep a close eye when grilling outdoors.
- For those who smoke, make sure a lit cigarette is completely extinguished.
- When camping, use existing campfire rings when possible and keep fires small.
- Scrape away litter, duff, and any burnable material within a 10 foot diameter circle. This will keep the campfire from spreading.
- Never leave a campfire unattended.
- Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet. Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again.
- Use a cooking stove instead of a campfire to prepare meals.

At the Governor's direction, the following steps have been taken to properly prepare the state for the increased danger of fires.

The New York State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Albany is closely monitoring the situation and is prepared to provide a heightened state of readiness. Representatives from the Office of Emergency Management (State OEM), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) will staff the State EOC on a 24/7 basis as necessary.

DEC will issue an emergency regulation today implementing a statewide ban on residential brush burning through October 10. Violators of the open burning state regulation are subject to both criminal and civil enforcement actions. In addition, the Department of Environmental Conservation will suspend all burning permits previously issued. A moratorium on new permits is now in effect through October 10.

In April, Governor Cuomo declared a state of emergency for Suffolk County as brush fires threatened almost 1,200 acres of land. Staff from State Police, DEC, OFPC and State OEM were deployed to assist local governments in Suffolk County and other regions of the state, and State Police helicopters were used to perform water-dropping missions.

For more information on preventing wildfires, visit <http://www.dhse.ny.gov/oem/event/brush-fire.cfm>