

TEXAS INTERAGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SITUATION REPORT

Friday, November 16, 2007

National Preparedness Level: 1
Southern Area Preparedness Level: 2
TFS Preparedness Level: 2

CURRENT SITUATION

For the reporting period November 9-15, Texas Forest Service responded to 28 fires for 533 acres. The largest was 221 acres in Travis County where 25 homes were threatened by a fast-moving grass fire. TFS units also responded to a 60-acre escaped debris pile in Smith County yesterday as relative humidity dipped below 20 in some areas of East Texas. No fires were reported on federal lands. Fire departments reported 42 fires for 342 acres in the on-line reporting database. There are no uncontained large fires at this time, but local fire activity has increased significantly this week due to gusty winds and low relative humidity combined with an overabundance of dry grasses across the state. Forty-four county burn bans are now in place across the state due to the fuel conditions. The burn ban map can be viewed at <http://tfsfrp.tamu.edu/wildfires/DecBan.png>

At the request of the Texas Forest Service, the State Operations Center activated two National Guard Blackhawk helicopters this week to assist with the potential fire activity associated with the passage of a cold front. The helicopters assisted in saving 3 homes on a 125-acre fire in Guadalupe County yesterday. In another fire near Elgin, numerous mobile homes were threatened and one was destroyed. Fire departments in Brazoria County were busy with two large fires yesterday near the towns of Danbury and Rosharon. Numerous homes were threatened but none was lost.

Rainfall deficits continue to build across the state. For the past 60 days, at least 90% of the state has received less than 50% of normal rainfall and at least half of the state has received less than 25% of normal rainfall. The last widespread rain event for the state was during the first week of August.

Freezing temperatures have been limited so far to the High Plains, Rolling Plains, Southern Plains, the higher elevations of the Trans Pecos, and parts of East Texas as far south as Woodville, but a combination of dry conditions, frost, and seasonal change has cured or is curing grasses across the state. Fire managers should remain alert for forecasts that include critical thresholds for minimum RH and 20' wind speed. Critical thresholds can be found on the Predictive Services maps at http://www.tamu.edu/ticc/psa_map.htm

A new Power Point presentation created by the TFS Predictive Services group has been posted on the TICC web page at http://tfsfrp.tamu.edu/wildfires/Winter_08_Fire_Season_Outlook.pps The slides are from a briefing TFS will be giving today to the Governor's Division of Emergency Management and other state agencies.

No charges will be brought against the 10-year-old boy accused of starting a fire in Southern California that burned 38,000 acres and destroyed 25 homes. Prosecutors dropped the case because of the difficulty in proving "intent to cause harm". The complete article can be viewed at <http://cms.firehouse.com/content/article/article.jsp?id=57106§ionId=4>

WEATHER OUTLOOK

There are no red flag warnings or watches issued for Texas today.

A surface low pressure trough will move through the Panhandle today causing wind to the northwest and then to the east. Winds speeds will be much lighter than those observed yesterday. Fire danger will increase Monday as dry southwest winds increase. A cold front is expected to arrive in the area Tuesday. Some precipitation in the form of light rain or snow may fall during mid-week. Very low dew points will keep RH values down in the Trans Pecos today despite abundant high level cloudiness. Isolated showers will be possible today. Southwest winds are expected to bring in very dry air early in the next work week and may cause the initiation of red flag warnings on Tuesday. North Texas will see high grass fire danger today as southerly winds increase and RH values remain low. RH is expected to increase tonight through the weekend, with the possibility of some showers across the southern portion of the forecast area. Central Texas will see relative humidity increase through Saturday as south/southeasterly winds develop. There is a chance for wetting rains Saturday night

through Sunday morning. Warm and humid conditions are expected to return Monday and Tuesday. Fair weather conditions are expected to continue in East Texas, but an increase in cloudiness will be observed today. Fuels will remain dry the next couple of days, but a decent chance of rain on someday may bring some moisture to area fuels.

TODAY'S SAFETY MESSAGE

Fire Shelter Site Selection – The primary objective of every operations fire plan is to keep firefighters out of an entrapment situation. However, firefighters must always be prepared for the possibility of having to deploy their fire shelters. The key to a successful fire shelter deployment is proper site selection. Consider the following when discussing shelter deployment site selection:

- Pick a site that will keep the fire shelter away from flames and convective heat. It should also limit the amount of radiant heat that reaches the shelter.
- Select an area with no fuels, or if that isn't possible, select a site in light fuels such as grass where the flaming front passes quickly. Clear the site to mineral soil if at all possible. If time is critical, pick a site with the least fuel.
- Pick natural firebreaks (e.g., wet meadows; creek beds; wet, swampy areas; large rockslides with no fuels). Note that rough terrain in rockslides may make obtaining an effective seal impossible, thus making the site unacceptable.
- Areas on the lee side of ridge tops and knobs can be effective deployment sites because convective heat and flames will generally continue rising above them.
- Wide areas that have been cleared of fuel such as dozer lines or roads can be effective deployment sites. In larger areas, don't let trucks, dozers, and other equipment occupy the best deployment sites.
- Flat areas on slopes, such as benches or road cuts, offer some protection from radiant and convective heat. Level areas like these can keep you below the path of flames and convective heat. The ditch on the inside of the road, if free of fuel, can improve the effectiveness of deploying in a road cut.
- Avoid areas that tend to funnel smoke, flames, and hot gases, such as narrow draws, chutes, chimneys, and saddles on ridge tops.
- Know how long it takes to reach your safety zone. Crew supervisors should identify and communicate likely escape routes and safety zones.

FIRES AND ACRES

There are no uncontained large fires at this time.

Incident Name	Agency	Size	% Cont	Ctrl date	Total Pers	TPL/DOZ	Eng	A/C	TFS Pers	Fed Pers	# Structures	
											Lost	Saved

Note: Large fires are considered to be 100 acres or more in heavy fuels or 300 acres or more in grass or brush, or any fire that has significant structure involvement.

State (Joint responses by TFS and fire departments)

Unit	11/9-15		Year to Date			
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Structures Lost	Structures Saved
TFS – Linden	8	32	184	2,264	12	44
TFS – Henderson	8	79	152	1,349	14	105
TFS – Woodville	9	61	114	2,370	3	33
TFS – Conroe	0	0	24	381	3	16
TFS – West Zone - N	1	15	12	2,094	2	64
TFS – West Zone – S	2	346	21	2,135	0	89
TFS – West Zone - W	0	0	12	4,892	1	39
State Totals	28	533	519	15,485	35	390

*O – yesterday's observed class day; F – today's forecast class day

For an explanation of using class days to forecast fire risk, go to http://www.tamu.edu/ticc/class_days.pdf

Federal

Unit	11/9-15		Year to Date			
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Structures Lost	Structures Saved
National Forests in TX	0	0	12	190	0	0
US Fish & Wildlife Svc	0	0	32	3,140	0	0
National Park Service	0	0	1	75	0	3
BIA – Alabama Coushatta	0	0	4	8	0	0
Federal Totals	0	0	49	3,413	0	3

Fire Departments (Local responses only, requiring no state assistance. Based on data entered into the Fire Department Wildfire Reporting System)

Region	11/9-15		Year to Date			
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Structures Lost	Structures Saved
Linden	4	2	471	1078	11	202
Henderson	5	8	531	1657	5	165
Woodville	1	1	154	447	7	129
Conroe	3	3	113	705	0	844
West Zone – North	4	24	677	4239	7	196
West Zone – South	6	18	912	6027	17	476
West Zone - West	19	286	932	42,235	16	337
Fire Department Totals	42	342	3790	56,388	63	2349

Year-to-Date Totals for Texas

Agency	Fires	Acres	Structures Lost	Structures Saved
State	519	15,485	35	390
Federal	49	3,413	0	3
Fire Departments	3,524	51,046	51	2,186
Totals	4,092	69,944	86	2,579

The National Interagency Situation Report can be found at <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>

The Southern Area Coordination Center Morning Report can be found at <http://gacc.nifc.gov/sacc/predictive/intelligence/SACCMorningReport.pdf>