

# Burning permits required Oct. 15

Mid-October marks the start of forest-fire season in Tennessee.

During fire season, Oct. 15-May 15, state law requires citizens to obtain a permit before doing any open outdoor burning.

"The burning permit system is a very important wild-fire prevention tool," said state forester Steve Scott. "Getting a burning permit is more than just a requirement of state law. It serves as a useful way for us to communicate with citizens about how, when and where it is safe to burn."

Citizens can obtain a verbal burning permit by simply calling their the Division of Forestry office from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

Permits are generally good for 24 hours and can be issued for weekends.

Roane Countians wishing to obtain a burning permit should call 354-1054.

Activities requiring a burning permit include, but are not limited to unconfined, outdoor burning of brush and leaves, untreated wood waste, and burning to clear land.

Burning permits are required in all areas of the state unless superseded by local ordinance, so forestry officials suggest that individuals check with their city government for any burning restrictions.

State forestry officials offered advice on outdoor burning:

- Watch the weather: wind can blow a fire into the woods.

- Have tools, such as a leaf rake and garden hose, and help on hand to control the fire.

- Establish a control line around the fire down to bare dirt before starting the fire.

- Notify neighbors before burning as a common cour-

tesy.

- Stay with a fire until it is completely out. It is illegal in Tennessee to leave an open fire unattended. The offense is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail and/or a \$500 fine.

Those burning are responsible for their fire — and any damages it may cause if it escapes — so forestry officials advise the public to plan carefully before burning.

Most escaped fires are result of poor location of the burn pile. Make sure to have a water source if possible, and never locate the burn pile near forested areas or uncut dry grass fields.

So far in 2006 1,923 wild-fires have consumed 29,350 acres statewide.

Most of these fires occurred at the end of Tennessee's fire season — Jan. 1-May 15 — although

there was increased fire danger during the summer drought.

According to the Division of Forestry, 903 escaped-debris fires burned about 7,500 acres, while 684 arson fires burned 19,000 acres.

Anyone with information about arson-related fires is encouraged to call the Tennessee Arson Hotline at 1-800-762-3017.

A cash award of up to \$1,500 is offered for information leading to the conviction of an arsonist.

During fire season, anyone burning without a permit is subject to a Class C misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and/or a fine not to exceed \$50.

For more information about burning permits, call your local state Division of Forestry office or visit online at [www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/forestry](http://www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/forestry) then click on Fire Information.