



Town of Needham, Massachusetts Media Release

Office of the Town Manager

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Needham Outdoor Fire Ban Extended Through November 15

Any Outdoor Fire Will Spread and Threaten People and Property

Needham, MA - As drought conditions spread across Massachusetts and the wildfire risk continues to grow, Needham Fire Chief Tom Conroy and municipal leaders are prohibiting any outdoor fires at least until Friday, November 15.

“Historically low rainfall, bright and breezy weather, and bone-dry fuel sources mean that any outdoor fire will quickly grow out of control,” said Chief Conroy. “Every firefighter battling a preventable wildfire is one who can’t respond to a house fire, car crash, or medical emergency. Help us help you. Please use caution and common sense and refrain from any outdoor activity that could spark a fire.”

Burning yard waste is already prohibited across Massachusetts through January 15 and year-round in some communities under 310 CMR 7.07, the Open Burning regulation. Today’s order additionally restricts the outdoor use of fire pits, chimineas, candles, cooking/heating equipment, and other ignition sources under Section 10.10.2 of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. The Code grants fire officials the authority to prohibit any and all open flames and other ignition sources under certain hazardous conditions, including extreme drought.

Burning yard waste, cooking or heating outside, hot work like cutting and grinding, and even careless disposal of smoking materials can ignite a fire that puts people, pets, and property in danger. Per the Needham Fire Department, no outside fires are permitted until further notice.

All of Massachusetts, including Needham, is facing an unprecedented fall wildfire season. Statewide, fires in October rose 1,200% above the historical average, and the 133 fires reported in the first week of November represent more than six times the average for the entire month. Many have damaged homes and other properties. According to Chief Conroy, the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services, and the Department of Conservation & Recreation’s Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry, almost all of these fires start with human activity and can be prevented by limiting outdoor activity that involves open flames, sparks and embers, hot engines or gasoline from power equipment, and other ignition sources.

Months without meaningful rainfall, abundant dead leaves and vegetation, bright sunshine, and gusty winds make the current and expected weather conditions ripe for a wildfire in every city

and town in Massachusetts. At the same time, static water sources like lakes and ponds are supplying less water and water pressure to extinguish these fires. Because about 45% of Massachusetts homes are in or near wooded areas, almost any significant wildfire will threaten residential areas.

“The faster we hear about a fire, the better chance we have of safely extinguishing it,” said Chief Conroy “If you see smoke or flames, please call 9-1-1 right away so we can protect you, your neighbors, and our community.”

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