



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

Wildfire Prevention After Hurricane Michael

Hurricane Michael left millions of acres of timber uprooted, broken, and prime for burning. **In Florida, 72 million tons of timber** – that's 2.5 million log trucks worth of wood – were damaged across 11 Panhandle counties. **In Georgia, 20.5 million tons of pine and 17.2 million tons of hardwood** – totaling 37.7 million tons or 1.5 million truckloads of timber.

Increased wildfire risk affects everyone.

Dense pockets of wildfire fuels can result in:

Increased potential for fire starts. Property owners may try to burn debris without the proper safety measures in place and inadvertently cause wildfires.

Increased severity of fires. The volume of dead and down fuels left in Hurricane Michael's wake is likely to contribute to the number, intensity, and duration of wildfires over the next three to ten years. Typically, there are 4.87 tons per acre of available fuel in Florida. Now, the average is up to 58 tons per acre, a ten-fold increase in the amount of fuel on the ground. In the catastrophic area, there are over 100 tons per acre.

Increased difficulty in fire suppression. Responding to more frequent and intense wildfires will require additional funds, equipment, and manpower. The Florida Forest Service expects initial attack and response to wildfires may be delayed as a result.

Increased danger to firefighters. Fire managers anticipate a substantial surge in the difficulty of suppressing wildfires in both the wildlands and the wildland urban interface (WUI).

Increased danger to homeowners. Using the mapping application SouthWrap, the Florida Forest Service has identified 233 communities at severe risk of wildfire damage as a result of the hurricane. Road access and escape routes will be affected and in some cases eliminated due to debris piles. And even areas not directly impacted by wildfires will be affected by smoke and ash.



Remember, only you can prevent wildfires.

All Florida residents and visitors should avoid any activity that could result in a wildfire, including backyard debris burning, dragging chains on pavement, and using equipment without spark arrestors.

Before burning storm debris outdoors:

- Determine alternative ways to dispose of storm debris.
- Know the burn rules for your area.
- If you burn debris, contact your local Florida Forest Service office to know how to do so legally and safely.

- **Hunters and campers**, please use special care with campfires. High wildfire danger will exist for 1-2 years.

- **ATV users**, please ensure your ATV is equipped with an approved and functional spark arrestor.

Plan ahead to protect your home and community from wildfires.

First, create a lean, clean, and green area of defensible space around your residence. Firewise USA materials can help you get started.

After cleaning up around your home, help reduce future wildfire damage by:

- Using fire-resistant building materials when repairing or rebuilding homes.
- Coordinating distribution of Firewise USA materials to impacted areas.

Help protect your community from future wildfire damage by identifying and addressing:

- Shortages in fire suppression resources due to greater fuel loads.
- Limited or blocked access to roads and/or evacuation routes due to fuel loads and/or wildfires.
- Stretches of road impacted by debris piles that could contribute to traffic accidents.



For more information, contact your state forestry agency.