

# Accelerated drying increases potential wildfire ignitions statewide in Texas

July 16 2020, by Caylee Reid

---



Game Ranch Wildfire in Nolan County. Credit: Texas A&M Forest Service

Significant wildfire activity has increased statewide, and accelerated

drying has elevated the potential for new wildfire ignitions. New wildfires will become increasingly difficult to extinguish if current temperatures and drying conditions persist into August as forecasted, according to Texas A&M Forest Service experts.

"Vegetation is rapidly losing moisture due to consecutive days of extremely high temperatures," said Brad Smith, Texas A&M Forest Service predictive services department head. "Grass that was green five days ago has wilted and turned brown under the accelerated drying produced from the extreme heat. It will be quite difficult to replenish this lost moisture during the normally dry months of July and August."

Rich Gray, Texas A&M Forest Service chief regional fire coordinator, said state resources have been "extremely busy," responding to the uptick in wildfire activity across the state, and conditions continue to deteriorate at a rapid pace.

"Much of Texas is primed for wildfires right now," said Gray. "While it's important for individuals to take steps to prepare and protect their homes and families for a wildfire, I would also urge Texans to think about protecting our [first responders](#), too—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic—and prevent a wildfire from ever starting."

Successfully preparing for a wildfire requires everyone to take personal responsibility for protecting themselves, their family and their property.



Night operations on the Buffalo Creek Wildfire. Credit: Steven Carter, Texas A&M Forest Service

- Creating defensible space around your home allows for low intensity, slow-burning conditions in the event of a wildfire.
- Within the first 5 feet of your home, use non-flammable landscaping materials. Within the first 30 feet of your home, [water plants](#) and trees and mulch regularly, and consider xeriscaping if you are affected by water restrictions.
- A healthy, well-maintained landscape is important to the survival of homes during a wildfire. Make sure plants are carefully spaced, low growing and free of resins, oils and waxes that burn easily.
- Remove dead vegetation from under the deck of your home and within 10 feet of the house.
- Prune trees 6-10 feet up from the ground.

If a wildfire is spotted, immediately contact [local authorities](#). A quick response can help save lives and property.

Since July 1, Texas A&M Forest Service and local fire departments have responded to 155 wildfires that burned 27,889 acres across the state. Many of the recent [wildfire](#) starts have been attributed to humans and their activities—such as equipment use and debris burning—and are preventable.

"It is up to residents to take the first steps in protecting their families, homes and property, long before the fire even starts," said Kari Hines, Texas A&M Forest Service Firewise coordinator. "Local firefighters rely on us all to be prepared for wildfires and create a [safe environment](#) for them to operate in by creating defensible space around our homes."

Provided by Texas A&M University

Citation: Accelerated drying increases potential wildfire ignitions statewide in Texas (2020, July 16) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-07-potential-wildfire-ignitions-statewide-texas.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.