

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOREST SERVICE

Operation Order 2019-204

Effective: July 1, 2019

PRESCRIBED FIRE

General

This order supersedes 2010-204 Prescribed Fire and all previous operation orders and policies pertaining to prescribed fire operations.

Objective

This operation order establishes the policies and procedures for conducting prescribed fire operations within Maryland on public and/or private land. All prescribed fire operations shall comply with Maryland DNR regulations COMAR 08.07.04 Forest Fire Protection and Maryland MDE regulations COMAR 26.11.07 Open Fires Authority. This policy will serve as guidance to other Units within the Department.

Prescribed Burn Plans

In compliance with the above regulations, for prescribed fires occurring before 4 pm, all prescribed fire practices greater than one acre shall have a written prescribed burn plan. Any practices less than one acre may be approved with a verbal plan at the Project's discretion and issued a Maryland Forest Service Burning Permit.

Maryland Forest Service employees shall submit prescribed burn plans in the approved standard plan format. All other prescribed burn plans may be submitted using this format or an alternate written format containing all of the same required information. Plans shall have attached maps including general site location, site map of proposed burn area, and one and five mile smoke impact radius from the burn site.

The landowner/agent or local Maryland Forest Service office may prepare the prescribed burn plan. Applicant shall submit the prescribed burn plan to the Maryland Forest Service at least 30 days prior to the projected start date of the plan. A Prescribed Burn Plan number shall be assigned by the Fire Manager using the year-region # format (Western 2010-1001; Southern 2010-2001; Central 2010-3001; Eastern 2010-4001). The Fire Manager shall review and approve the plan within 15 days or request additional information needed from the applicant. Upon approval, the plan shall be returned to the applicant and a copy sent to the local Forest Service office. Prescribed Burn Plans shall be valid for the calendar year in which the burn is scheduled to occur as specified in the plan.

The applicant is responsible for compliance with all federal, state, and local jurisdiction laws and regulations and acquiring any necessary permits from those agencies.

All firebreaks are to be constructed and completed in compliance with the approved prescribed burn plan. Upon completion, the applicant shall notify the local Maryland Forest Service office. A Maryland Forest Service Burning Permit may then be issued for the site.

Ecologically Significant Areas (ESA)

Prescribed Burns conducted for ESA management on state lands require a written objective provided by the WHS State Restoration Ecologist. The State Restoration Ecologist then must review and approve the Prescribed Burn Plan before submission to the Fire Manager.

Agency Conducted Prescribed Fire Operations

The Maryland Forest Service may conduct prescribed burns in all fuel types on state lands managed by the Unit. The Maryland Forest Service may assist other DNR Units with prescribed burns on lands managed by their Unit upon request and if personnel and resources are available at the discretion of the Regional Forester. Prescribed burn projects will be prioritized by the regions to accomplish management objectives. Agency priorities are state land management, hazard fuel treatments, site preparation, federal assistance, and private assistance.

A landowner/agent may request the Maryland Forest Service to conduct a prescribed burn on private property. If the Agency is to conduct a prescribed burn on private land, a Maryland Forest Service Prescribed Burning Agreement shall be completed. The agreement shall be in effect for the same duration as the approved prescribed burn plan. The Maryland Forest Service shall provide an estimated cost within the prescribed burning agreement. Cost shall be per the approved Maryland Forest Service Prescribed Burn Rate schedule. Rate schedule shall be reviewed annually by the State Fire Supervisor and approved by the Director.

All prescribed burns shall be completed within compliance of the approved prescribed burn plan. The Burn Boss shall verify all Unit personnel on site are in compliance with Maryland Forest Service Wildland Fire Training and Personnel Protective Equipment Operation Orders. Prior to ignition, the Burn Boss shall ensure current and expected conditions are within the approved plan prescription and complete and sign the Prescribed Burn Checklist. If all questions on the checklist are answered “yes”, the Burn Boss may proceed with the test fire.

Upon successful completion of a test fire, prescribed burn operations may commence. The Burn Boss is responsible for having fire weather conditions monitored during the burn. The Burn Boss may terminate burn operations at their discretion at any feasible point if fire weather conditions become unfavorable to safely complete the burn unit.

Additional burn units shall not be ignited if fire weather conditions are outside of the burn plan prescription.

Upon completion of the prescribed burn operation; all exterior fireline shall be checked and mopped up to ensure control. At least one responsible person shall remain on site until danger of fire escape has passed. The Burn Boss shall arrange for periodic patrol of the site until the fire is declared out. The Burn Boss shall also evaluate any post fire rehab efforts needed and ensure the practices are completed.

The Burn Boss shall complete a post burn evaluation form and submit to the Fire Manager within ten days.

Qualifications

All prescribed burn operations shall be conducted and supervised by a qualified and experienced Burn Boss. Burn Boss qualifications are as follows:

Maryland Forest Service personnel should be certified as a Wildland Firefighter II and have a minimum of 2 years experience as a firefighter on wildfire incidents and prescribed burns.

Other agencies, landowners, and/or contractors shall have successfully completed a minimum 16 hour workshop on prescribed fire procedures and have 3 years experience as a participant in prescribed burn or wildfire incidents or have 5 years experience as a participant in prescribed burn or wildfire incidents.

Notifications

The Burn Boss or designee shall ensure notification at least 24 hours prior to prescribed burn operations:

1. All adjacent landowners
2. Fire Manager
3. County Air Quality Officer (if applicable)
4. Land Unit Manager (State Lands)
5. State Restoration Ecologist (ESA Management)

Burn Boss shall notify the following prior to ignition of the test fire:

1. Local Maryland Forest Service office
2. County Emergency Operations Center

Operations Order 2019-204 Prescribed Fire

This operation order is effective immediately.



Donald VanHassent
Director / State Forester