



State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTS & LANDS

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To: Forest Fire Wardens

From: Steven Sherman, Chief, NH Forest Protection Bureau

Date: October 15, 2025

Subject: **AMENDMENT** to the State Prohibition on Kindling Open Fires and Smoking in and near woodlands

On Monday, September 22, 2025, the Governor's Proclamation prohibiting open fires and smoking in and near woodlands took effect. On October 15, 2025, the Governor and Council **amended the proclamation to allow an exemption for public events or municipal activities as long as they work with the Forest Fire Warden and Fire Chief and complete a Wildfire Prevention and Response Plan.**

...it shall be unlawful for any person in the State to

- Kindle any open fire, including fires built for camping, the burning of debris, or warming, but the following shall be excluded from these restrictions:
 - Training fires conducted under the direct control and supervision of qualified instructors at a training facility operated by a fire department or government entity; *Provided*, that a permit for such training fires is obtained from the Division of Forests and Lands prior to burning.
 - Category I "campfires" contained within fire resistive rings at public or private campgrounds that have permanent staff on site; *Provided*, that a permit for such Category I fires is obtained from the Division of Forests and Lands prior to burning.
 - Liquid fueled gas grills, lanterns or liquid-fueled gas fire stoves.
 - **Category I, II, or III fires—campfires or small bonfires—associated with a public event or municipal activity where the event organizer has a written wildfire prevention and response plan, and secures appropriate onsite municipal firefighting resources for the entire time period an open fire is burning, *Provided*, that the wildfire plan is approved by the local Forest Fire Warden and the local Fire Chief, and a permit for the fire is obtained from the Division of Forests and Lands prior to burning.**
- smoking a pipe, cigar and/or cigarette outdoors in or near woodlands, or on public trails.

What this means is:

- Category I fires are prohibited everywhere, except in a campground which has been inspected, meets the campground campfire specifications, and has a seasonal fire permit
- Category 2, 3, and 4 fires are banned **everywhere**, public and private lands
- Public events can complete a wildfire prevention and response plan which outlines the extra precautions being taken to reduce the risk of wildfires. Plan approval and a fire permit are required before burning
- No smoking is allowed in or near woodlands or on **public** trails

Also to note: The online fire permit system will remain shut down until weather conditions improve.

What Wardens NEED to do for this amendment:

- Work with public events that wish to have a fire and have the event organizer(s) complete the Wildfire Prevention and Response Plan. Sign the plan and issue a fire permit once it is completed to your satisfaction. **Forward a copy of the plan to your Forest Ranger**

What you need to know for enforcement:

- 227-L:15 Prohibiting Smoking or Kindling of Fires; Penalty
 - Anyone violating the Proclamation is guilty of a violation under RSA 227-L:15
 - Wardens can issue a Written Warning (DNCR Form 5801) for 227-L:15, Prohibition Smoking or Kindling
 - You can also call the Forest Ranger to follow up with enforcement action. Rangers can issue a warning, violation or Administrative summons with fine amounts from \$124.00 up to \$1,000.00
- 227-L:17 Permits; Damages; Penalties
 - This can be used specifically for someone burning without a permit
 - Wardens can issue a Written Warning (DNCR Form 5801) for 227-L:17, which has a quick check box on the front of the Warning Form
 - You can also call the Forest Ranger to follow up with enforcement action. Rangers can issue a warning, misdemeanor, violation or Administrative summons with fine amounts up to \$1,200.00
- Definition of Woodlands is found in RSA 227-G:2, XIX. "Woodland" includes cut-over land, slash, and such other land as bears a sufficient amount of wood growth, wood, weeds, grass, or other growth as to be likely to be burned.

Payment for time spent by the Warden and Deputies on fire prevention, preparedness, enforcement and suppression are covered under RSA 227-L:22 Municipal Fire Control Payments and will follow the normal billing procedures with the state cost sharing 50/50 with the municipality. The payment of on-duty personnel is not a billable cost.

This Proclamation will remain in effect until the conditions improve, at which time we will advise Wardens. We have seen some days with precipitation which have offered short term relief (days). If the rain pattern continues, we will look to remove the prohibition as soon as possible. Please continue to communicate your needs to your Forest Ranger and we will do our best to assist you.

Sincerely,



Steven Sherman

Chief, New Hampshire Forest Protection Bureau

Encl.: 1. Wildfire Prevention & Response Plan Template 2. 10/15/25 Fall Fire Season Update
3. Campground Requirements 4. Proclamation Sign for Posting