

TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE BURNING FLINT HILLS PASTURES THIS SPRING

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Ranchers and landowners are reminded to use web-based tools at www.ksfire.org as the spring burning season gets into full swing. These include interactive smoke models that predict the potential contributions burn events will have on urban air quality. State officials hope these resources will help spread out the timing of burns to mitigate air quality problems.

The website is associated with the Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan, which is an attempt to balance the need for prescribed fire in the Flint Hills with the need for clean air in downwind communities. Provisions of the plan are voluntary, leaving flexibility in the hands of the land manager, but also putting the responsibility on him or her to make wise decisions.

There is a ban during April on burning waste, structures, vegetation or any other materials in 16 counties. This does not apply to prescribed burning of pastures or Conservation Reserve Program acres. The ban is effective in Butler, Chase, Chautauqua, Cowley, Elk, Geary, Greenwood, Johnson, Lyon, Marion, Morris, Pottawatomie, Riley, Sedgwick, Wabaunsee and Wyandotte counties.

Another useful tool on the website is the weather information section. This area not only includes the current conditions for a specific area, but you can get the National weather service forecast for a specific point on the map. The web site has more information about the April burn ban, Fire Management practices, and additional information.

Important environmental conditions that should be considered before lighting the match are:

1. Air Quality--Current air quality. If air quality is already being impaired by significant smoke from fires already burning or nearby metropolitan areas have predicted poor air quality, the land manager should consider rescheduling to another day where less impact will be made.
2. Transport Wind (speed and direction)--Transport winds should be 8—20 miles per hour (mph) and preferably in a direction away from metropolitan or other sensitive areas.
3. Mixing Height--Burning should occur when mixing height is above 1800 feet which will allow dispersion of the smoke that is produced. Timing--The best time to burn is during daylight hours.
4. Transport wind and mixing height decrease as the sun goes down which will lessen smoke dispersal. Relative Humidity/Air Temperature/Fuel Moisture--Burning should occur with relative humidity between 30 to 50 percent.
5. Cloud Cover--Burn when cloud cover is between 30 to 50 percent.

Butler County Burn regulations

The Butler County burn requirements can be found on the Butler County web site:

www.bucoks.com Go to the Emergency Communications (E 9-1-1) department and select the controlled burning link. This will not only provide you with the phone numbers for reporting the start and end of a controlled burn, but it includes a link to the Kansas state for burning and the Butler County resolution for burning in the county. While all burns must be called in, only those of less than 40 acres need to meet certain criteria for permitting. For safety reasons, the local fire authority can ban all burning in their fire district.

The fire service department link will provide you with a map of the fire districts and contact information for them.