

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES FIREFIGHTING ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT WITH FEMA
Also Orders Burning Ban Reinstated Due To Drought And Approach Of Spring Fire Season

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley has signed an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency that enables North Carolina to seek federal assistance to help pay costs incurred while fighting major fires. He also reinstated the statewide burning ban, effective noon Thursday (Feb. 14) in advance of the spring fire season.

“I know the burn ban is an imposition and creates hardship but we have no choice until conditions improve,” Easley said. “It is just not safe to burn because of the drought conditions and strong winds that will cause fire to spread quickly.”

Easley said the agreement with FEMA is a pro-active step to get federal assistance in the event the state has an active fire season this spring.

“North Carolina has a strong emergency response system with dedicated firefighters and other personnel who are ready, but if we face a substantial fire that threatens lives and critical facilities, we can ask FEMA for funding assistance,” Easley said. “This agreement fast tracks that paperwork process.”

FEMA’s Fire Management Assistance Grant Program provides federal money to cover 75 percent of the eligible costs incurred while fighting fires once a spending threshold has been met. To be eligible for the assistance, firefighting costs must be more than \$491,000 for individual fires and \$1.47 million for multiple fires. Expenses for assistance include:

- Fire equipment and supplies;
- Pre-positioning out-of-state, federal or international resources to help fight fires; and
- Emergency operations such as evacuation and sheltering, police barricading and traffic control.

Because of the ongoing drought and increased potential for wildfires, this is the first time North Carolina has participated in the FEMA fire grant program. It is regularly used by states, such as those in the western part of the United States, where wildfires are more common. The drought, which has caused trees and other vegetation to be especially dry and reduced water supplies that firefighters depend on for emergencies, means North Carolina faces an increased possibility of dangerous wildfires this spring.

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