

## Extra caution urged on wildfires this fall

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The Nebraska Forest Service says farmers, ranchers and homeowners should take extra precautions to prevent fall wildfires.

The extremely dry conditions that spurred an unusually active wildfire season, the lack of rain and an increase in the amount of dead and dying foliage could pose a higher risk of wildfires.

“The drought has left much of Nebraska’s landscape prone to fires, not only in forested areas but also in farm fields and around homes,” said Don Westover, wildland fire protection program director. “We’re urging Nebraskans to take steps to prevent dangerous wildfires this fall.”

Forestry officials encourage taking extra precautions, since large fires in Nebraska are not limited to the summer months. Last October, 154 wildfires burned more than 6,000 acres; 88 of those fires were related to equipment use.

“It’s not unusual for a harvest operation to start wildfires,” Westover said. “Corn and soy beans are not harvested until they are dry, which creates dry fuel for a fire.”

Farmers are urged to take steps to help prevent wildfires:

Maintain harvest equipment. Make sure it is in good operating condition so that it will operate as cool as possible.

Keep crop residue from accumulating on farm equipment – manifolds, ledges and other areas that become hot.

Start harvesting on the down-wind side of the field. If a fire breaks out, it will burn the crop stubble rather than the unharvested crop.

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Keep a fire extinguisher on board farm equipment. Fires start small, and many can be stopped before becoming a damaging wildfire.

Carry a cell phone and keep the local fire department's phone number programmed in your phone. The sooner you notify the fire department, the sooner a fire can be contained.