

[Lightning strikes cause 75 fires today in northeastern Washington](#)

Local News

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OLYMPIA - Lightning strikes that continued into the evening hours caused more than 75 new fires today in northeastern Washington. Many of the new wildfires were on public and private lands protected by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR has responded to today's outbreak by deploying 200 firefighters, 30 fire engines and 5 helicopters, plus a 900-gallon air tanker. Several other local and federal agencies also are responding to new fire reports in northeast counties where fire hazard levels on open land are rated "high" to "extreme" due to dry weather and low moisture levels in grasses, trees, and other vegetation.

So far, there have been more than 500 wildfires on the 12.7 million acres of public and private land that DNR protects. That's 100 more wildfires than at this time last year. As moisture levels fall below 11 percent in some parts of the eastside and 19 counties have fire danger levels rated as extreme or high, DNR urges caution when playing and working outside. **Fire resources** DNR urges people to help prevent wildfires. Wildfires, even those that do not damage structures or cause evacuations, are costly to state resources. So far, this year, resources used by DNR include more than: 45 helicopter missions 255 flight hours logged 2,250 buckets from helicopters dropped 506,250 gallons of water on fires 7,680 bottles of Gatorade consumed by fire crews 19,075 bottles of water consumed by fire crews **Fire safety tips** Because the weather is warming up and vegetation is drying out, fires can ignite quickly. Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark encourages the public to help prevent wildfires. **Outdoor safety** Be sure recreational vehicles have operating spark arresters; Do not park any vehicles in dry, grassy areas, as the heat from exhaust systems can ignite the dry grass; Never leave a campfire unattended, and be sure it is completely out before leaving; Before burning, check local conditions and restrictions by calling 1-800-323-BURN (2876) or going to <http://fortress.wa.gov/dnr/firedanger>

Home safety Do an exterior home inspection; Remove moss and needles from the roof and rain gutters; Clear vegetation and flammable materials from around propane tanks; Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from the house; Keep decorative bark and railroad ties away from the foundation-these types of materials provide great places for sparks to smolder; Trim tree branches to ten feet off the ground for tall trees and adjust for shorter trees; this helps reduce fuels that aid in fire traveling; Maintain defensible space around the home, which is the large, open area firefighters use to defend homes during a wildfire event. http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/rp_prevent_preparehomefire.pdf

DNR's wildfire mission Administered by Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark, DNR is responsible for preventing and fighting wildfires on 12.7 million acres of private, state and tribal-owned forestlands in Washington. DNR is the state's largest on-call fire department. During fire season, this includes more than 700 DNR employees who have other permanent jobs with the agency and about 375 seasonal workers. DNR also participates in Washington's coordinated interagency approach to firefighting.