

TARRANT COUNTY

NEWS & INFORMATION



January 2011



www.tarrantcounty.com

Wildfire risk prompts Fire Marshal precautions

Few Texans believe their homes would ever be at risk from wildfires. But whether you live near the forested areas of East Texas or the grasslands of the west, suburban areas in Texas are also at risk during severe fire seasons. Due to the recent hard freezes, vegetation is dead, extremely dry and can easily catch fire.

Last month the Tarrant County Commissioners Court declared that a Burn Ban is in effect for 90 days. Also Texas Governor Rick Perry issued a Declaration of Disaster due to the threat of wildfires in Texas.

- If possible in dry seasons, keep your grass well watered, with grass and weeds mowed to no more than two inches in height.
- Remove ladders, trellises or any other object that might serve as a path for fire to travel from ground level to the roof of a building, or from the ground into canopies of trees.
- Avoid planting shrubs and trees that catch fire easily, such as juniper, yaupon holly, pine, evergreen, eucalyptus and fir trees. Instead, plant hardwoods, crepe myrtle, red yucca, forsythia, China rose and Texas sage.
- Remove any tree limbs located within ten feet of your chimney and roof.
- Prune tree limbs from ground level to six feet up.
- Regularly rake up leaves, dead limbs and other dead vegetation.
- Remove branches, twigs and leaves from roof and gutter areas.
- Prune limbs of trees and shrubs that are near the ground.
- Ask power companies to clear branches away from power lines.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from the house.
- Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety containers.

Farm and ranch families and citizens living in rural areas can help protect their property during potentially severe wildfire seasons by taking precautions before wildland fires break out. Fire experts advise clearing a 30-to-50-foot space around homes and other buildings. Keep grass mowed down whether it is dormant or still green.

Brush should be cleared from areas between trees and the branches pruned. Make sure the areas beneath utility lines are clear of brush, tall grass and trees in order to protect essential services.

Other wildland fire safety tips include the following:

- Clear vegetation between buildings and nearby fields or woodlands to create an area that does not feed the fire. Clear areas along roadways.
- Keep mufflers and spark arresters on agricultural equipment in proper working order.
- Watch out for sparks when using welding equipment to build fences or repair equipment.
- Avoid driving or parking vehicles in grassy areas where tall, dry grass can come into contact with hot pollution control equipment under your vehicle.

For tips on cooking outdoors and welding during a burn ban, go to www.tarrantcounty.com and click on the "Burn Ban" logo.

Dealing with Diabetes: Put Life Back in Your Life

People with diabetes who are 60 or older have a great resource in Tarrant County. Texas Healthy Lifestyles Workshop is an evidence-based program for people who have diabetes, are at risk of diabetes or care for someone with diabetes. Texas Healthy Lifestyles was developed and tested by Stanford University as a Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.

The free workshop helps people learn ways to self-manage their diabetes. For six weeks, participants attend 2½-hour sessions taught by trained volunteers, many of whom are diabetic themselves or they are the caregiver for someone with diabetes. Participants learn to take control of their diabetes by understanding new treatment choices and learning better ways to talk with their doctor and family about their condition. They learn to make better nutrition choices by reading and understanding food labels, and they learn to create meal plans. Information about stress management, appropriate exercise choices and practical ways for dealing with pain and fatigue also are a part of the workshop.

Each participant takes an active role in their health care by setting goals and making a step-by-step plan to improve their overall health and their life. They learn that diabetes is not just about taking medication; it is a lifestyle change that can yield big changes by starting small.

Here is what some participants have said:

- *"The class has been challenging and encouraging. The class has challenged me to take a continuous look at my diabetes and set daily goals to control my disease."*
- *"The action planning and behavior change aspect of the program is really solid, and I see the participants making small incremental changes every week that are adding up into lifestyle change, and that is awesome."*
- *"...I learned a lot about food, the importance of counting carbs, fats, reading labels, taking meds, making plans and sticking to them."*
- *"The class for me was very beneficial. You are never too old to learn something new."*

Research on this program has shown that participants are able to manage their symptoms better and communicate more easily with their doctors and loved ones. People who complete the program feel better, are less limited by their diabetes, and may spend less time at the doctor's office or in the hospital.

Texas Healthy Lifestyles of Tarrant County is a collaborative initiative, funded through the Texas Department of Aging and Disabilities Services, United Way of Tarrant County, and the Area Agency on Aging of Tarrant County, and made possible through the cooperation and support of Senior Citizen Services, Tarrant County Public Health, and VA North Texas Health Care System.

For more information or to enroll in a workshop, call Senior Citizen Services at 817-413-4949 or the Aging and Disability Resource Center at 1-888-730-2372. An updated calendar of workshops can be found through www.scstc.org.