

Dept. of Natural Resources: When leaves fall, fire danger rises

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MADISON, Wis. – Warmer temperatures, gusty winds and dry vegetation resulted in nearly 50 wildfires across the state this week. Winds are expected to increase going into the weekend—no rain expected until Monday.

“The last week or so has been unusually busy due to the dry fuels, increased burning activity and lack of snow statewide,” said Catherine Koele, DNR fire prevention specialist. “While these fires have remained relatively small in size, fire control officials are concerned the forecasted winds over the weekend could result in increased fire occurrence and rapid fire growth.”

The main causes of these wildfires have been leaf and brush pile burning, sparks from lawn and recreational equipment, campfires and improper ash disposal from fireplaces. It is not uncommon to see the risk of wildfire rise in the fall.

Wildfires can occur any time of the year when the ground is not completely snow-covered. Things are especially vulnerable in the early spring and again in the fall after the leaves have fallen from the trees and the plants and grasses go dormant in preparation for winter.

Smoldering embers can remain hot for days, even weeks. If using a wood stove or fireplace, empty the ashes into a metal container with a tight-fitting lid or dump the ashes onto bare soil then drown the ash with water and stir until the embers are completely cold.

The same goes for campfires, burn barrels and burned leaf and brush piles – before leaving the area, drown the ashes, stir and keep adding water until all smoke is gone.

The DNR recommends holding off on conducting any debris burning until the ground is completely snow-covered. In addition, keep a close eye on the daily fire danger and know local burning restrictions before using any fire in the outdoors.

For more information on the fire risk in your county, [visit the DNR website.](#)