

Oklahoma Wildfires: April 18, 2018

Drought, Winds Push Threat to Extreme Levels

Wildfires in western Oklahoma are nearing conditions not seen in at least a decade because of the mixture of high temperatures, low humidity and heavy winds, the National Weather Service said Monday.

A weather service meteorologist, Doug Speheger, said Tuesday's forecast represented the highest potential for the spread of wildfires in the past 10 years, according to a database that considers a variety of factors.

Temperatures are projected to reach the mid-90s with humidity below 10 percent and winds gusting to 40 mph. The forecast includes northwestern Texas and the Texas Panhandle.

"With these conditions wildfires can spread rapidly, present control issues for firefighters and pose a real threat to public safety, said Texas A&M Forest Service Fire Chief Mark Stanford.

The area also is in extreme to exceptional drought, the two most severe designations.

Firefighters sent by the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Area Coordination Center are fighting one fire that's burned more than 245,000 acres (990 square kilometers) near Leedey, about 110 miles (180 kilometers) northwest of Oklahoma City and another blaze that's burned nearly 68,000 acres near Woodward, about 20 miles north of Leedey.

"We're out there strengthening fire lines... widening lines to make sure they're in real good shape with the wind that is on the horizon," said spokesman Todd Schroeder at the scene of what's known as the Rhea Fire near Leedey. "The winds that we may have tomorrow may make this really stand up and run again."

At the 34 Complex fire near Woodward, spokesman John Nichols said firefighters were doing much the same thing.

"The winds are coming, but wet weather is supposed to be coming too, and we're hoping the wet weather will arrive," Nichols said.

The weather service says rain and thunderstorm chances will increase Thursday night and Friday with strong to severe storms possible in southwestern Oklahoma and western north Texas on Friday.

Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/16/oklahoma-wildfires-threat-continues.html>

To Get Help

Oklahoma

- United Way 2-1-1: Dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://www.211oklahomahelpline.org/>
- American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/local/oklahoma/>
- Office of Emergency Management: 405.521.2481 <https://www.ok.gov/OEM/>

Shelters

Two independent shelters are now open for residents displaced by the Rhea fire:

- First Baptist Church, 301 N. Noble Ave., Watonga
- Elm Grove Community Church, 53502 S. County Rd 226, Chester

American Red Cross and Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief continue to provide meals to firefighters and residents impacted by the Rhea and 34 Complex fires.

American Red Cross is also providing food and beverages to responders at a fire west of Laverne in Beaver County.

Source: <http://www.newson6.com/story/37978922/wildfires-continue-to-ravage-western-parts-of-oklahoma>

State Of Emergency

A State of Emergency remains in effect for 52 Oklahoma counties due to ongoing wildfires and critical fire weather conditions that began Thursday. Under the Executive Order, state agencies can make emergency purchases and acquisitions needed to expedite the delivery of resources to local jurisdictions. The declaration also marks a first step toward seeking federal assistance should it be necessary.

The counties included in the governor's declaration are: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Carter,

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Cimarron, Cleveland, Comanche, Cotton, Creek, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Garvin, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnston, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Lincoln, Logan, Love, Major, Marshall, McClain, Murray, Noble, Oklahoma, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Osage, Pawnee, Payne, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Roger Mills, Seminole, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Washita, Woods and Woodward.

Burn Bans in Effect

A Governor's Burn Ban remains in effect for 36 counties: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Blaine, Caddo, Canadian, Cimarron, Comanche, Cotton, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Garfield, Grady, Grant, Greer, Harmon, Harper, Jackson, Jefferson, Kay, Kingfisher, Kiowa, Logan, Major, Noble, Oklahoma, Osage, Pawnee, Roger Mills, Stephens, Texas, Tillman, Washita, Woods, Woodward.

Additional county burn bans are in place for Alfalfa, Canadian, Gran, and Major counties.

Outdoor burning and other activities that could spark a fire are strongly discouraged. Do not throw cigarettes out car windows. Report any suspicious smoke or fires to your local law enforcement or fire authority.

Wildfire Damage Survey

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management is working with Dewey and Woodward County emergency management departments to provide a survey for residents to submit damage information caused by the Rhea Fire and 34 Complex Fire. Residents impacted by the Rhea Fire and 34 Complex Fire can report damages to their property by calling 211 or using the following link <http://arcg.is/uK0Te>. Reporting damage helps local and state emergency managers better coordinate response and recovery efforts.

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Road Conditions

Call 511: The Department of Transportation offers its free 511 service for travel information and roadway conditions, including road and bridge closures, toll suspensions and major evacuation routes.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

- <https://ok.gov/odot/>

Power Outage

To report an outage, call:

Oklahoma

- Ozarks Electric Cooperative: 405.297.2460
- PSO: 580.584.5254

Airport Closures

Passengers are urged to not come to the local airport unless your flight has been confirmed. If your flight has been canceled, please call your airline's customer service telephone number or rebook through your airline's website.

Flight delay information: <http://www.flightstats.com/go/Home/home.do>

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.