

Southern Area

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Subject: Severe drought conditions, increased fuel loading, and low live fuel moistures across much of Texas, Oklahoma, Western portions of Louisiana, and Western Arkansas are contributing to potentially very active fire behavior.

Discussion: The Energy Release Component(s) on many RAWS sites in the Western portion of the Southern Area are above the 97th percentile range and several are setting new all-time maximum values.

Above average temperatures and below normal precipitation are forecasted for the next 30-90 days. Fuel moisture will continue to decline until precipitation develops in the form of tropical/monsoon influence. All fuel size classes and types will continue to be available to support fire spread.

Deep drying at the surface and subsequent drops in water table moisture have allowed for the entire surface layer to become available for deep burning. In coastal areas, this deep burning occurring in areas of hurricane damage has affected the potential for hold over fires and re-burns, and the ability of suppression forces to control the edges of going fires.

Fuel moistures in Texas are at critically low values. Many areas have reported only a few tenths of an inch of precipitation since last October. The US Drought Monitor Climate Prediction Center is showing much of the Area of Concern to be extreme to exceptional hydrologic drought.

The Departure from Average Greenness graphic show much below average greenness and implies that live foliar fuel moistures are generally less than 125%. Expect continued rapid fire growth as a result of prolific spotting and availability of exceptionally dry fuels.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Monitor fire danger indices and maintain situational awareness. Both rates of spread and intensities will compromise firefighter safety.
- Anticipate any ignition in light flashy fuels to grow rapidly and intensely even without the presence of wind.
- Watch out for re-burn situations, especially when fire spreads rapidly on the surface while preheating the shrub and timber understory.
- Anticipate the initiation of torching and crown fire development more frequently.

Mitigation Measures:

- Maintain situational awareness by basing all actions on current and expected fire behavior.
- Ensure firefighters have good anchor points - keeping one foot in the black.
- Emphasize LCES, the 10 Standard Fire Orders, and 18 Watch Out Situations.
- Direct attack may not be a valid tactical option unless supported by mechanized equipment or aerial resources.
- Obtain daily fire behavior and weather briefings and understand the relationship to current fuels conditions.

Area of Concern: Map attached to explain in detail geographic extent of area of concern.