

Kansans reminded to be aware of fire risk

Even though the COVID-19 virus dominates the news, Kansans are reminded there are other dangers currently facing the state, particularly the risk of wildland fires.

“I know the coronavirus is on everyone’s mind right now, but we still must remain vigilant to other hazards, such as wildfires,” Governor Laura Kelly said. “Our emergency responders have so much to deal with during this challenging time, so we must all do our part to minimize the danger of wildfires so they can concentrate on dealing with the effects of the virus.”

The southwest region of the state is of special concern today with dry weather conditions and low relative humidity, strong winds and an abundance of dry grass and other flammable vegetation, which are ideal conditions to set off a wildland fire. Fire risk in the southwest is high to very high today. Fire risk for the rest of the state is moderate to low.

This threat will continue tomorrow as strong winds and low relative humidity increase the fire danger on Thursday with very high to extreme grassland fire danger forecast for almost the entire state with the remainder of the state in a high grassland fire danger. Outdoor burning is highly discouraged.

Over the next couple of days, Kansans are urged to use extreme caution when burning outdoors, even with barbecue grills. Be sure all smoking materials are extinguished before discarding them. It only takes a spark to start a fire. Storms systems will be moving into the state over the weekend and into the early part of next week, which should mitigate the risk of fires across the state.

Last year, Kansas fire departments responded to more than 2,500 vegetation-related fires that caused four deaths and burned almost 28,000 acres in the state. Almost 500 of these fires required counties to seek mutual assistance to bring them under control.

Kansans should also be informed of the threat of severe weather across multiple regions of the state today into Thursday and winter weather for northwestern and some areas of north central Kansas Thursday into Friday. We encourage citizens to sign up for weather alerts on phones or other devices or use a NOAA

All-Hazards Weather Radio.