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Fire Chief

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Subject: Temporary Ban on the Use of Open Flames and Other Ignition Sources

Due to the ongoing drought conditions, combined with the extreme fire risks, the Middleton Fire Department is issuing a temporary ban on the outdoor use of open flames and other ignition sources until further notice under the authority of [Section 10.10.2](#) of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. This ban includes the use of chimineas, fire pits, and all cooking and heating devices.

As of yesterday, there have been 87 brush and wildland fires, including the almost 200-acre fire that is currently burning in Middleton. Almost all of these fires can be attributed to human activity and are most often preventable. These types of incidents not only tax local and state fire resources, but they prevent firefighters from responding to other types of emergencies such as structure fires or medical emergencies.

The weather conditions over the next several days will remain favorable for rapid-fire development. The lack of measurable rain combined with the abundance of ground fuels such as dry leaves and fallen trees makes the situation extremely dangerous. The lowering humidity combined with the steady winds and increasing temperatures also contribute to these dangerous conditions.

Extreme caution should be taken when performing any of the following activities:

- Use caution when using outdoor power equipment such as lawnmowers, leaf blowers, and all-terrain vehicles. Hot engines, sparks, and gasoline spills can ignite dry fuels such as leaves and grass.
- Ensure proper disposal of ashes from fireplaces and wood stoves by placing them in a metal can, dousing them in water, and covering them with a tight-fitting lid. Ashes can remain hot long after the fire goes out. Never dump them outdoors or in the trash.
- Extinguish smoking materials in a sturdy ashtray with water or sand. Never toss cigarette butts, matches, or other smoking materials over the edge of a balcony or dry vegetation or debris.

A notification will be sent out as soon as this temporary ban is lifted. Please feel free to reach out should you have any questions.

Thank you,

Douglas K. LeColst
Fire Chief