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Rogers County continues county-wide burn ban

ROGERS COUNTY — Rogers County Board of County Commissioners voted to continue the county-wide burn ban during their regular board meeting Monday, due to unchanged weather conditions.

According to the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor scales, the intensity of fire danger range is D0-D4. Rogers County's intensity category level remains at D3 (extreme).

Emergency Management Director Scotty Stokes asked commissioners to make an exception to the burn ban. "I have had a request that we make it where people can charcoal and smoke food. I have to say 'food' because we have instances where people use charcoal to burn trash," he said.

Trash and brush burning is not permissible at any time during a burn ban, Stokes pointed out. He also indicated the importance wind factors play, stating to avoid charcoal and smokers if winds are above 10 miles per hour.

He further emphasized to commissioners there would have to be safety measures in place in order to make that exception, such as charcoaling/smoking foods or using gas grills on a concrete, gravel or asphalt surface-area of 400 square feet (20 x 20 square-feet) to prevent embers from escaping.

District 1 County Commissioner Dan DeLozier said what is allowed or not allowed needs defined more for the public. "We do have ranchers that weld," he said.

Stokes said in instances where it is job-related requiring the use of welding equipment, he said they should use a fire-retardant blanket and a fire-watch person.

District 3 Commissioner Ron Burrows asked the board to also consider making an exception to a local company's upcoming fire extinguisher training program that had been planned months prior. He asked Stokes to make recommendations for that exception, and without that exception, the training cannot be done.

Around 90 employees will use over 100 fire extinguishers during that training, he mentioned.

Stokes said the company will most likely perform training with what “falls under the gas side of things” in a large parking lot without creating embers. “As long as the winds are not high that day, they are fine to do that.”

Rogers County Commissioners Chairman Steve Hendrix of District 2 agreed the resolution should include fire extinguisher training, charcoaling/smoker cooking within non-flammable spaces with adherence to fire safety measures.

DeLozier made the motion to the board to put that resolution into place effective immediately.

Oklahoma Statute, Title 2, Section 16 -26. B states this burn ban does not apply to gas or electric grilling over non-flammable surfaces or industrial welding over non-flammable surfaces.

The statute makes it illegal for any person “to set fire to any forest, grass, range, crop, or other wild lands, or to build a campfire or bonfire, or to burn trash or other material that may cause a forest, grass, range, crop of other wild lands fire.”

Violations can be enforced by local or state law enforcement officials.

Stokes said he recommends commissioners revisit the burn ban resolution every two weeks until there is an imminent change in weather.