

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**FOR INFORMATION:**

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**BRONSON WARNS OF INCREASING WILDFIRE THREAT; ASKS  
PUBLIC'S HELP TO MINIMIZE RISK**

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson today advised residents that below average rainfall for the last four to five months has significantly increased the state's wildfire risk.

The torrential rain associated with Tropical Storm Fay last summer has been all but offset by the recent drought. In fact, the Keetch-Byram Drought Index, which measures available soil moisture and runs from 0 (saturated) to 800 (desert-like), currently stands at 511 – more than double the normal drought index this time of year.

“We are asking both residents and visitors alike to be careful with any outdoor burning and to check with their local officials to determine if there is a burn ban in effect in their area,” Bronson said.

During the past year, 2,894 wildfires have burned nearly 106,000 acres in Florida.

To minimize the wildfire risk, Bronson is asking residents and visitors to do their part, including:

- Never leave any fire unattended.
- Clear an area to bare soil for campfires, and be sure they are put out before you leave.
- Report any suspicious fire by calling 911.
- Do not burn yard waste during dry, windy conditions.
- Do not toss cigarettes or other lighted materials out of car windows.

Moreover, Bronson encourages residents to protect their homes from fires by clearing leaves and pine needles from the roof and gutters, removing dead vegetation from around the home and trimming trees and limbs within 15 foot of a chimney.

For more information on fire prevention tips, as well as burning rules and regulations, visit the Florida Division of Forestry's website at [www.fl-dof.com](http://www.fl-dof.com) or call your local Division of Forestry office.