

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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Fire Weather Watches, Red Flag Warnings, What's the difference?

Throughout the winter months we get used to seeing ice warnings, or snow warnings. Although the last few weeks we have been seeing a different warning come across our weather channels. A Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch, so what are these fire warnings and what is the difference?

A Red Flag Warning, is a warning issued for critical fire danger and signifies that those weather conditions are occurring, or will occur shortly. According to the K-State Research and Extension Agronomy Update published on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, these critical weather conditions consist of a combination of strong winds, low relative humidity, and warm temperatures. We all know that these factors will make suppressing a fire, very challenging. While a Fire Weather Watch is issued in advance of critical fire danger. These watches signify the forecasted possibility of critical fire weather occurring in the next 24-48 hours. Some offices issue these more than others. These watches are meant to provide you advance notice so that you can take proper precautions.

These warnings and watches occur when weather conditions create an atmosphere with explosive fire growth potential. So when we have these watches or warnings occur, we need to be extra vigilant with our fire safety. Any spark has the potential to create a large fire, so avoid outdoor burning, and watch for hot exhaust systems over grass, and take extra care with welding or anything that may create a spark.

During the winter time when our grassland prairie is dormant and dead it creates a perfect fuel that can easily carry a fire. We will continue to see these watches and warnings occur between October and May, until the spring rains arrive to drive grass growth. While this doesn't mean that the fire

weather potential isn't there in the remaining months, especially in years of drought, grasses can become dormant and can carry fire easily. So as we see these watches and warnings come in for the remainder of the winter months, be extra vigilant to avoid fire sparks and be aware of your surroundings.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.