

Dry weather prompts town to ban burning

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Order prohibits open burning and lighting of fireworks until further notice

Persistent dry weather has sparked a ban on burning in the Town of Grafton.

The ban, which will remain in effect indefinitely, was ordered Tuesday by Grafton Fire Chief John Place after he discussed the idea with Town Chairman Lester Bartel.

“We agreed that it would be a good idea, just to be on the safe side,” Place said. “It’s been so dry, I looked at it as more of a common-sense thing.”

The ban prohibits all open burning, including the lighting of fireworks. With Fourth of July celebrations just around the corner, potential safety threats from fireworks became an immediate concern, Bartel said.

“We’ve had a couple of people contact (the town) about fireworks permits, so we wanted to make sure that we did something beforehand,” he added.

Bartel said a forecast of extended dry conditions and excessive heat — with temperatures expected to be in the 90s most of this week — also reinforced the need for a burning ban.

“It doesn’t look like we’re going to have rain anytime soon, so (the ban) could last for quite a while,” he said.

Besides protecting lives and property, the ban could help emergency responders, Bartel noted. “You have to take the health and safety of the firefighters into consideration, too,” he said. “We don’t want to have them out in this kind of weather if they don’t have to be.”

Place said burning bans are typically imposed in townships where fields and other open spaces are more prevalent. Although Grafton firefighters have not had to respond to any grass fires this spring, the threat is clearly heightened during dry conditions.

On Monday, a cigarette butt tossed into mulch outside a store in Grafton sparked a small blaze that was quickly extinguished, Place said.

There are no plans to cancel the fireworks show that will be held this Saturday as part of the annual Holidaze festivities at Grafton’s Lime Kiln Park. As a precaution, though, firefighters will water down the fireworks grounds Friday and Saturday before the show, Place said.

In addition, firefighters will be at the site during the show to handle any emergencies. “We’re definitely going to have our equipment down there,” Place said.

Bartel said the town hasn’t had to impose a burning ban for several years. Although such orders aren’t 100% effective, they are necessary proactive measures, he added.

“Not everybody is going to follow them, but we have to do what you can to prevent fires,” Bartel

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