

# Confused?



The various notifications issued by our agency and others can be very confusing. Here is a quick primer to help media professionals distinguish among similar-sounding announcements.

## **Red Flag Fire Alert** (SC Forestry Commission)

Issued by the South Carolina Forestry Commission when specific conditions are met. Relative humidity, winds, ground fuel moisture and outdoor activity factor. A *Red Flag Fire Alert* means conditions are favorable for a fire escaping easily and spreading rapidly. All outdoor burning is strongly discouraged. However, burning is not necessarily illegal. This is the most common notification you'll see from this agency.

## **Red Flag Warning** (National Weather Service)

Cautionary statement issued by the National Weather Service when conditions are favorable for the rapid spread of wildfire. Does not mean outdoor burning is currently illegal. More commonly used in the western U.S., though seen here occasionally.

## **State Forester's Burning Ban** (SC Forestry Commission)

Actually carries more weight than the governor's ban. Includes agricultural burning. Relatively rare.

## **Governor's Burning Ban**

As the name implies, issued by the governor's office with input from the Forestry Commission and various firefighting agencies. Statewide, but does not apply to agricultural burning. Rare.

## **A word about the law**

These notifications generally apply to unincorporated, rural areas where debris burning and prescribed fires are routine. Municipalities have their own rules and regulations regarding burning within city limits. Those laws often make the above bans and warnings moot. Sometimes local laws go into effect when one of the above notifications is made. Also, when and where burning is allowed, only vegetation (yard debris, etc.) may be burned. Trash burning is illegal.

Hopefully, these definitions will help eliminate some of the confusion that will result when things heat up this season. Please distribute this explanation around your newsroom and weather offices. And by all means, don't hesitate to call the **Public Information Office at (803) 896-8820** for clarification.