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For Immediate Release

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Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Open Burning Ban Begins May 1, 2011 for 54 Georgia Counties

Georgia EPD acknowledges the severe storms that hit the state recently. EPD will be addressing the proper management of debris in counties affected by those storms in a separate press release.

Beginning May 1st and ending September 30th, EPD's Open Burning Ban will be enforced in 54 Georgia counties.

The Open Burning Ban prohibits citizens and businesses from burning yard and land-clearing debris. This rule is in addition to the year-round state ban on the burning of household garbage.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) is reminding citizens that these rules are in place for a reason – and the reason is health.

Besides the obvious effects of smoke on the human body such as watery eyes, smoke from fires contains chemicals and pollutants that negatively impact a person's health. Burning yard waste releases nitrogen oxides and particle pollution into the air. Both pollutants contribute to lung and heart disease. Particle pollution is made up of extremely small particles that can increase the risk of a heart attack. In the heat of summer, nitrogen oxides combine with fumes from fuels, paints and vegetation to form ground-level ozone. Ground-level ozone can cause inflammation to the lungs. Burning household garbage, which is banned year-round in Georgia, releases even more dangerous pollution.

The Open Burning Ban that begins May 1st is not new. Beginning in 1996 with the 13-county metro Atlanta area, it has gradually come to include 54 counties. With Georgia's growth and development comes more traffic, more industry, more land clearing and more building -- all contribute to air pollution. Some actions, such as campfires and agricultural activities are exempt.

The good news is that the most recent monitoring data shows that Georgia is attaining all current air quality standards. "We are working hard to improve air quality in Georgia," says James A. Capp, Georgia EPD Air Branch Chief. "This success is confirmation that the clean air programs we have in place in Georgia, including the open burning ban, are working."

The Clean Air Act requires U.S. EPA to periodically review the current air quality standards to ensure that they

are still protective of public health. As a result of their review, air quality standards may be tightened further in the future. The U.S. EPA has indicated their intent to lower the air quality standard for ground level ozone later this year. Therefore, rules such as the open burning ban are just as important as ever for ensuring that Georgians have clean air to breathe.

Citizens can access more information on the Open Burning Ban by calling the EPD District Office in their area (phone numbers listed below.) Small businesses can obtain help and information by calling EPD's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program toll-free at 877-427-6255.

Counties included in the ban and the appropriate EPD District Office phone numbers follow:

• **Metro Atlanta District Office: 404-362-2671** Carroll, Clayton, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Heard, Henry, Rockdale, Spalding counties

• **Northeast District Office (Athens): 706-369-6376** Banks, Barrow, Butts, Clarke, Hall, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Putnam, Walton counties

• **Northeast District Office (Augusta): 706-792-7744** Columbia, Richmond counties

• **West Central District Office: 478-751-6612** Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Lamar, Monroe, Peach, Pike, Twiggs, Upson, Meriwether, Troup counties

• **Mountain District Office: 770-387-4900** Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Dawson, Floyd, Forsyth, Gordon, Haralson, Lumpkin, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker counties

For more information about alternatives to burning such as composting and chipping, please call Joe Dunlop at the Department of Community Affairs at 404-679-4940 or email him at joe.dunlop@dca.ga.gov, or call Roy Edwards at Georgia's Department of Natural Resource's Sustainability Division at 404-657-7449 or email him at roy.edwards@gadnr.org.

Debris can also be hauled to a commercial processing/grinding/composting operation or to an inert or construction and demolition landfill. For a list of landfills in your area, please call EPD's Solid Waste Management Program at 404-362-2692.

For more information on the open burning ban and exemptions to the rule, please call the Air Protection Branch at 404-363-7000 or visit the newly updated burning rules webpages at: <http://www.georgiaair.org/airpermit/html/planningsupport/openburning/index.htm>

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