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For Immediate Release

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Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) Issues Temporary Exemption from Burn Ban for Vegetative Debris from Recent Storms

EPD is temporarily exempting from Georgia EPD Air Quality Rule 391-3-1-.02(5) the burning of vegetative debris resulting from storm damage for counties declared by the Governor as being in a State of Emergency as a result of the storms in late April 2011. This exemption applies only to vegetative debris. Other storm damage debris, such as that from damaged or destroyed housing, is Solid Waste and is not covered.

Recently, severe storms impacted Georgia with tornadoes, hail, and damaging winds. Based on the extensive damage that these storms caused, on April 28, 2011 Governor Deal declared a State of Emergency in the following counties: Bartow, Catoosa, Coweta, Dade, Floyd, Greene, Lamar, Meriwether, Monroe, Morgan, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Spalding, Troup, and Walker Counties. As more information on the storm damage becomes available it is possible that additional counties may be added.

Even though EPD is issuing this exemption, in order to protect air quality and public health, EPD always recommends that vegetative debris be composted, chipped, or hauled to an appropriate landfill instead of being burned.

The most recent ambient monitoring data shows that Georgia is attaining all current air quality standards. However, the Clean Air Act requires U.S. EPA to review periodically the current air quality standards in order 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. And the particulate matter standard is scheduled to be considered within the next year. Burning in these counties can directly affect the future attainment status of these counties and EPD recommends that local officials consider this issue prior to any open burning.

Effective May 2, 2011, the prohibition on the open burning of vegetative debris resulting from storm damage as required by Georgia EPD Air Quality Regulations is temporarily lifted. This exemption is applicable for counties declared as State of Emergency counties from the storms that swept through Georgia in late April 2011. This exemption expires at midnight on May 31, 2011. Specific provisions of the temporary exemption are listed below:

- Individuals wanting to burn vegetative debris resulting from storm damage on the property which it originated shall obtain a permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) prior to conducting the burn.
 - GFC has an online permitting system at www.gatrees.org/OnlinePermits/.
 - A burn permit may also be obtained by calling 1-877-OK2-BURN.
 - Machine generated piles require a phone call to the local GFC office.
- Whenever feasible, all burning should be conducted between 10:00 a.m. and one hour before dark.
- Only vegetative debris such as trees, brush, and stumps, resulting from storm damage is subject to this exemption.
- Open burning of vegetative debris should only be conducted when all other options (such as disposal in a landfill, chipping, or composting) have been exhausted. When open burning is the only viable option for disposal, an air curtain destructor should be used, if available.
- Open burning is not allowed on days when air quality in the area is forecasted to exceed the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ground level ozone or particulate matter.
- Municipalities collecting storm debris for disposal should follow the **EPD Guidance on Handling Storm-Generated Debris**. This document is available by contacting the EPD Mountain District Office at 770-387-4900.

More information on Georgia EPD's open burning regulations can be found at:

<http://www.georgiaair.org/airpermit/html/planningsupport/openburning/index.htm>

More information on the management of storm damaged trees and the procedures for the getting a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission can be found at:

<http://www.gatrees.org/index.cfm>

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