

S. A. F. E. NEWSLETTER

Safety Awareness For Employees

UAMS

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Burning Ring of Fire

As of late February 2026, multiple Arkansas counties have enacted urgent burn bans due to high wildfire risks from dry, windy conditions, with dozens of counties under restriction, particularly in the Northwest region. Bans generally prohibit all open-air burning, including debris, trash, and campfires with violations potentially resulting in Class A misdemeanors, fines up to \$2,500, and jail time.

Burn bans in Arkansas typically arise during periods of extreme drought or heightened fire risk. The state's diverse landscapes—from dense woodlands to open prairies—are beautiful but also vulnerable. When conditions become dry enough, local authorities may issue burn bans to prevent outdoor burning activities.

A burn ban is exactly what the name implies – no outside burning of any kind for a period of 60 days from the day the ban is issued or until it is lifted by the County Judge. Residents are urged to take the following steps to prevent wildfires in Arkansas:

- **Avoid Outdoor Burning:** Arkansans should avoid outdoor burning, even in areas that are not under a burn ban. Avoid activities that involve an open flame including fireworks, campfires, trash burning, open flame grilling, and prescribed or controlled burns.
- **Use Equipment Carefully:** Avoid driving or operating machinery in dry grass, ensure trailer chains do not drag on the ground, and do not drive on flat tires.
- **Report Fires Immediately:** If you see smoke or fire, report it by calling 1-800-468-8834.
- **Stay Informed:** Monitor conditions across the state by viewing the [county-by-county map](#) and following the Department on social media.

Safety Spotlight

Fire extinguisher training is an essential component of workplace safety, equipping employees with the knowledge and confidence needed to respond effectively during a fire emergency. Should the need arise, are you ready to Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep?

Beginning March 2, the UAMS Fire & Life Safety division will begin providing hands-on fire extinguisher training. For more information contact Mike Rhoades at 501-686-5551.





Lifting Heavy

Lifting and shelving items the safe way can help prevent back pain. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons lays out five steps for safe lifting. In order:

- 1. Move close to the object.**
- 2. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.**
- 3. Bend at the knees.**
- 4. Tighten your stomach muscles.**
- 5. Lift with your legs as you stand up.**

Is the object too heavy or an awkward shape? Don't attempt to lift it by yourself. Ask someone to help you. The size and weight of the item also matter. If the item is light, AAOS says you should:

- Lean over the object;
- Slightly bend one knee and extend the other leg behind you;
- Hold on to a nearby surface for support as you reach down to pick up the item.

On the other hand, if you are going to lift something heavy, you should:

- Move close to the object;
- Bend at the knees;
- Lift with your leg muscles and avoid bending at the waist.

Once you've picked up the item, keep your knees slightly bent to maintain your balance while keeping the item close to you.

"If you have to move the object to one side, avoid twisting your body," AAOS says. "Point your toes in the direction you want to move and pivot that direction."

When placing the item that you're carrying onto a shelf, AAOS recommends you step close to the shelf, spread your feet in a wide stance and place one foot in front of the other to give you a solid base of support. Then, slightly extend your arms to place the item onto the shelf. The academy advises against leaning forward or fully extending your arms in front of you while holding the object.

Is the shelf too high? AAOS has advice for that too: "Lift the object chest high, keep your elbows at your side, and position your hands so you can push the object up and onto the shelf."

Whether handling light or heavy objects, taking the time to use correct posture, ask for assistance when needed, and position your body properly when placing items on shelves can make a meaningful difference.

Using proper lifting and shelving techniques is essential for preventing injuries and maintaining long-term health. Practicing these habits consistently can significantly reduce strain on your back and improve overall safety.

Higher Ground

Ladders are surprisingly dangerous. Many of us are guilty of trying to hop a ladder a few feet to the side instead of climbing down and moving it the proper way. Or maybe you've done the suicide lean by extending your body as far to the side as possible to get to a spot that's just out of reach. While you may have successfully completed these dangerous maneuvers in the past, chances are you're heading for a fall.

It's important to use the right tool for the job, and that includes ladders... It's also important to exercise extreme caution while using a ladder. Each year, more than 100 people die and thousands more are injured from falls and other ladder-related incidents. The three most common causes; ladders maintained in poor condition, using the wrong type of ladder for the job, and using the ladder improperly. Even if you don't work on or around ladders on a regular basis, the lessons below can protect you whenever you need to use these helpful reach-extenders.



- Read and follow all labels/markings on the ladder.
- Avoid electrical hazards! – Look for overhead power lines before handling a ladder. Avoid using a metal ladder near power lines or exposed energized electrical equipment.
- Always inspect the ladder prior to using it. If the ladder is damaged, it must be removed from service and tagged until repaired or discarded.
- Always maintain a 3-point (two hands and a foot, or two feet and a hand) contact on the ladder when climbing. Keep your body near the middle of the step and always face the ladder while climbing.
- Ladders must be free of any slippery material on the rungs, steps or feet.
- Do not use a self-supporting ladder (e.g., step ladder) as a single ladder or in a partially closed position.
- Do not use the top step/rung of a ladder as a step/rung unless it was designed for that purpose.
- Use a ladder only on a stable and level surface, unless it has been secured (top or bottom) to prevent displacement.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels or other unstable bases to obtain additional height.
- Do not move or shift a ladder while a person or equipment is on the ladder.
- Do not stand on the three top rungs of a straight, single or extension ladder.
- A ladder placed in any location where it can be displaced by other work activities must be secured to prevent displacement, or a barricade must be erected to keep traffic away from the ladder.
- Be sure that all locks on an extension ladder are properly engaged.
- Do not exceed the maximum load rating of a ladder. Be aware of the ladder's load rating and of the weight it is supporting, including the weight of any tools or equipment.

While some of these do's and don'ts may seem obvious, it's important to keep things in perspective. Ladder-related injuries and fatalities are completely preventable. Proper training and careful attention are key to ladder safety.

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