



For Immediate Release
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Dec. 6, 2012
VDOF-12069

Up To \$2,000 Reward Offered for Information on the Dickenson County Wildfire

Wildland fire investigators suspect that a wildfire that burned in Dickenson County in December was caused by human activity. The Virginia Department of Forestry is offering a reward of up to \$2,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible for the fire that was reported December 1, 2012 in the Skegg Branch area of the county.

A team of investigators from the US Forest Service and the VDOF believes the fire may be a case of woods arson. The fire burned on private property as well as on National Forest System lands in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest.

“The lives and property of residents and firefighters were directly threatened by this suspicious fire,” said John Miller, director of resource protection for the Virginia Department of Forestry. “When a wildfire occurs, it endangers lives and can cause unbelievable destruction to land, trees and homes,” Miller said. “In addition, when firefighters are working arson fires, they and their equipment are not available to suppress other wildland fires. This depletion of resources puts even more people and their property at risk.”

The VDOF and USFS need citizens to be vigilant in the fight against human-caused fires. If you believe you have information relating to the cause of the wildfire in Dickenson County, please call the Dickenson County Sheriff’s Office at 276.926.1600 or the VDOF Western Region Office in Salem at 540.387.5461 and report it. Your help may be worth **up to \$2,000** – the reward offered for information that leads to the conviction of responsible party. For other emergencies or to report a new fire, call 911.

"We need the public's help in the continuing investigation of the cause of the suspicious fire," Miller said. "Please call with any information no matter how insignificant you might feel it is. Your information may be just the piece of the puzzle that helps us put an end to potentially criminal acts."

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Arson Reward

Page 2

Woods arson is the common term for deliberately burning forests, grasslands or brush without the owner's permission. The VDOF and other law enforcement officials are concerned with the number and frequency of these dangerous, destructive and senseless criminal acts. Woods arson is a felony in Virginia and, when convicted, the guilty person could serve up to five years in prison, pay a fine of \$2,500 and be liable for the cost of suppressing the fire.

If you see any fire where firefighters have not yet arrived on the scene, make note of the following when reporting a fire:

- Location and time of the fire
- Description of persons observed in the area
- Description of any vehicles observed and the license plate if possible
- Any other pertinent information

-30-

The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.

With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 144,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide more than \$27.5 Billion annually in benefits to the Commonwealth.