



**Melissa Velez-Morales**

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**From:** Masser, Michelle  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 07, 2016 10:03 AM  
**To:** Harris, Laura  
**Cc:** Gouveia, Susan; Melissa Velez-Morales  
**Subject:** FW: NJDEP Press Release - DEP Warns of the Dangers or Drones Near Wildfires  
**Attachments:** Forest Fire Drones -- P22.pdf

CORRESPONDENCE

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**From:** Rogers, Joseph [mailto:Joseph.Rogers@dep.nj.gov] **On Behalf Of** Randazzo, Cindy  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 07, 2016 9:48 AM  
**To:** Randazzo, Cindy <Cindy.Randazzo@dep.nj.gov>  
**Subject:** NJDEP Press Release - DEP Warns of the Dangers or Drones Near Wildfires

Dear Municipal Clerk:

Please see the NJDEP Press Release concerning the warning of the danger of using drones near wildfires.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Cindy W. Randazzo  
Director  
Office of Local Government Assistance  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
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email: [cindy.randazzo@dep.nj.gov](mailto:cindy.randazzo@dep.nj.gov)

[www.nj.gov/dep/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/)

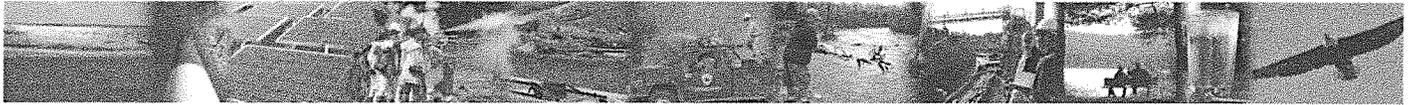
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# DEP NEWS RELEASE

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Chris Christie, Governor  
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor  
Bob Muto, Commissioner



## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2016

[www.nj.gov/dep](http://www.nj.gov/dep)

**Contact:** Caryn Shinske (609) 984-1795

Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795

Bob Considine (609) 292-2994

### **NEW JERSEY FOREST FIRE SERVICE WARNS OF DANGER IN USING DRONES NEAR WILDFIRES AS STATE ENTERS PEAK FIREFIGHTING SEASON *DRONE OWNERS INSTRUCTED TO KEEP EQUIPMENT AWAY FROM BLAZES SO FIREFIGHTERS, AIRCRAFT CAN OPERATE SAFELY***

**(16/P22) TRENTON** – As New Jersey heads into peak forest fire season in April, the State Forest Fire Service is warning owners of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or drones, to keep their equipment away from active wildfire areas so they do not interfere with firefighting efforts.

The Department of Environmental Protection’s State Forest Fire Service regularly uses planes and helicopters to fight and observe fires, and requires areas near blazes be kept clear so firefighters can maneuver their equipment close to the fire to protect structures and contain the spread of the blaze. Operation of drones over active wildfires, as well as over national and state parks, is prohibited by both federal and state law at all times.

“Our Forest Fire Service does an outstanding job protecting New Jersey’s forests and natural resources,” said Rich Boornazian, DEP Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources. “As we head into spring and the most active time of year for fighting wildfires, it is imperative that our firefighters are able to do their jobs safely, and without dangerous interference from these types of equipment.”

“While drone owners may not realize the potential danger, the presence of these types of equipment during forest fires hampers our overall ability to protect life and property in our wooded areas,” said State Fire Warden Bill Edwards. “A wide variety of aircraft, such as water-dropping helicopters, tanker aircraft and spotter aircraft, often operate above our actions on the ground. Use of drones in areas with aviation traffic is not permissible. In short, if you fly a drone near a wildfire, we can’t fly and put out fires.”

“Every owner of these devices must follow the laws and policies regarding use of drones and help us fight wildfires by keeping clear of these areas while we combat the fire from above and on the ground,” Edwards added. “Anyone who sees a drone over the area of a wildfire should call our emergency number at 1-877-WARN-DEP (1-877-927-6337), or call your local police or fire department.”

A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is often activated around wildfires to protect firefighting aircraft, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Consequently, only the agencies involved in the specific firefighting effort can fly any manned or unmanned aircraft in a TFR area.

Anyone who violates a TFR and endangers the safety of manned aircraft could be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties. Even in areas without a TFR, operating a drone could pose a danger to firefighting aircraft and, therefore, would violate federal aviation regulations.

Incidences of uses of drones in the area of wildfires have been on the rise locally and nationally. During the past year in New Jersey, drones were spotted over wildfires and areas of prescribed burns. Most recently, a low-flying drone above a prescribed burn near the Robbinsville Airport in Mercer County interfered with the airspace around the burn, as well as the area for aircraft approaching the airport. In California, aviation resources could not properly battle a wildfire due to the presence of four drones above it. The fire spread and multiple vehicles on a nearby highway were burned as a result.

Educating people with little or no aviation experience on the proper use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) is the focus of the public outreach campaign “Know Before You Fly” developed by the FAA, UAS industry and modeling community. The groups work to educate drone owners about how to operate the equipment safely, in compliance with current regulations, and away from wildfire operations. The National Interagency Fire Center also has posted a video to warn users to “Be Smart. Be Safe. Stay Away.”

To learn more about the New Jersey Forest Fire Service, please visit [www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/fire/ff\\_aboutus.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/fire/ff_aboutus.htm) or like the agency on Facebook.

For more information about Unmanned Aircraft Systems and the “Know Before You Fly” campaign, please visit: [www.faa.gov/uas/](http://www.faa.gov/uas/)

For more information about drone safety and the “Be Smart. Be Safe. Stay Away.” campaign, please visit: [www.nifc.gov/drones/](http://www.nifc.gov/drones/)

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