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July 14, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIDALGO COUNTY EXTENDS BURN BAN

Today, the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court extended for a second time its burn ban, which has been effective since Jan. 28. The 90-day extension will take the burn ban through mid-October.

"Conditions are just as bad or worse than last year," said A.A. Tony Peña Jr., Hidalgo County Emergency Management Coordinator and Fire Marshal. "It's a tinderbox out there, but for whatever reason — either heightened awareness and preventative measures or sheer coincidence — we have not experienced the fires like we had last year in Hidalgo County. With the burn ban, we hope to keep fire prevention on the minds of our residents. The only thing that will stop fire season is a hard rain or tropical event."

Under a burn ban, outdoor burning is restricted in the unincorporated areas of Hidalgo County, including incorporated cities that do not have their own fire suppression resources. The outdoor burn ban, however, does not prohibit burning activities related to public health and safety that are authorized by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for: 1) firefighter training; 2) public utility, natural gas pipeline or mining operations; 3) planting or harvesting of agricultural crops; or 4) burns that are conducted by a prescribed burn manager under Section 153.047, Natural Resources Code.

Residential trash burning will be permitted, but only with a burn permit issued the County Fire Marshal's Office, located at 2814 S. Business 281, Edinburg, Texas. Burn permits are free of charge, but must be obtained in order to burn trash. **Residents with questions may call the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office at (956) 318-2656, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

The restriction does not ban outdoor cooking that takes place within a cooking apparatus — grill, pit, etc. Outdoor burning of any kind is prohibited on any day when a "fire watch" or "red-flag warning" weather advisory is issued by the National Weather Service. This burn ban can be revoked at any time should conditions improve.

A violation of this order is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.

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