

By Michael Paskewitz CEA, Staff Chair/Ag Agent

## FIELD AND BRUSH FIRE DANGERS TO PROPERTY

Until you have experienced the panic that comes from a field or brush fire burning out of control toward your home, barn, equipment, or livestock, it is hard to understand the reality of that situation. It is a feeling that no one wants to experience. The record rainfall from this past summer and the severe drought has created a potential perfect storm for field and brush fires. Summer rains exploded a sage grass epidemic that will likely take years to reverse. Dead and dry warm season grasses, weeds, leaves and debris created a lot of potential fuel. The lack of rainfall, low humidity and high winds has increased fire danger. Bush hogging, welding, grinding, cutting torch, dragging safety chain, cigarettes, and many other day to day activities can start devastating unintentional fires. It only takes a small spark to ignite a nearly unstoppable fire in these conditions.

### What else can we do to protect our property?

Property owners should create defensible space (area directly surrounding structures) so that homes or structures are more easily protected from wildfire.

Defensible space acts as a barrier between homes and forested or wildland areas. Consider anything that could transfer fire between homes and surrounding vegetation a wildfire hazard.

The Arkansas Forestry Commission has a saying: “lean, clean, and green.”

- A **lean** space has mowed, short grass; trees that are trimmed of branches six feet from the ground; and maintained landscaping that does not touch roofs or windows.
- A **clean** space is cleared of debris such as multiple vehicles, yard toys, tools, and other material that could be flammable.
- A **green** space is free of dead vegetation including leaves, pine needles, sticks and twigs –only healthy, live vegetation because it is less flammable than dead, dry debris.

Following these simple preventative steps could be the difference in losing or saving your structure if a wild fire occurs.

**Support your local volunteer fire department! Volunteers and equipment are always needed!**