

State of Vermont
Commissioner's Office
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
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Agency of Natural Resources
Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner

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June 24, 2026

Dear Town Clerks,

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) would like to make towns aware of several changes to Vermont's forest fire laws resulting from the enactment of [Act 162](#) of 2026. These changes affect the designation of town forest fire wardens, deputy town forest fire wardens, municipal wildfire response coordination, and record-keeping requirements. Act 162 goes into effect on July 1, 2026.

Please place this item on the agenda of your next Selectboard meeting for review and discussion and share this information with your fire department leadership and other relevant officials, including the existing town forest fire warden and deputy town forest fire warden.

Town Forest Fire Warden Designation

Act 162 changes the method by which town forest fire wardens are designated. Under the new law, the chief of the fire department, fire district, or private fire department with primary responsibility for fire response within the municipality will automatically serve as the town forest fire warden. Previously, town forest fire wardens were appointed by the Commissioner of FPR with the approval of the selectboard.

Municipalities served by multiple fire departments must designate **one** fire chief who will serve as the town forest fire warden. These towns should review their current arrangements and take any necessary action to formally identify the appropriate individual.

In the case where your town is served by another town's fire department, the chief of that fire department is designated as your town forest fire warden.

There will no longer be state involvement in the appointment or reappointment of town forest fire wardens, but municipal officials **must** ensure that FPR has current contact information for the designated town forest fire warden. Please fill out this linked personnel form at your earliest convenience. [Vermont Town Forest Fire Warden Contact Form](#)

Deputy Forest Fire Wardens

Town forest fire wardens may appoint deputy town forest fire wardens to assist with the responsibility of issuing Permits to Kindle Fire (Burn Permits). In cases where your town is served by another town's fire department, the fire chief may choose to designate a local deputy forest fire warden to help with the issuance of Permits to Kindle Fire in your town.

Campfire Definition

Act 162 now establishes a statewide definition of a campfire. A campfire is defined as a fire 36 inches in diameter or less that is built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings, or fires 36 inches in diameter or less built in a location that is 200 feet or more from any forestland, or field containing dry grass or other flammable plant materials contiguous to forestland.

This definition clarifies which fires may be kindled without a permit and aims to help reduce confusion among residents regarding recreational fires. Per statute, campfires are excluded from requiring a Permit to Kindle Fire but may be banned by the FPR Commissioner during periods of elevated fire risk. Your town may have additional ordinances in place that further restrict campfires within your municipality. Clearly defining campfires allows the State to issue burn restrictions on debris burning and campfires during times of elevated fire danger or poor air quality.

Wildfire Reporting and Coordination

This legislation updates reporting requirements to help strengthen communication between municipalities and FPR during wildfire incidents. Town forest fire wardens are now required to notify FPR of all wildland fires in their jurisdiction within 24 hours of discovery. The town forest fire warden must also submit fire reports within 48 hours after extinguishment. Prompt notification and reporting to FPR is critical to ensure statewide response, situational awareness, and resource coordination.

Reimbursement for Fire Suppression Costs

Act 162 modifies procedures related to reimbursement for suppression activities on Agency of Natural Resources lands. Should a wildland fire occur on ANR land within your municipality that requires fire suppression and incur expenses, there are now mandatory steps to take for the municipality to seek reimbursement.

Fire Departments and municipal officials should ensure that suppression costs, personnel records, equipment usage, and related documentation are maintained in sufficient detail to support reimbursement requests when applicable.

Recommended Town Actions

To ensure compliance with the new law, municipalities should:

- Review Act 162 with the Selectboard and fire department leadership.
- Confirm the individual serving as the town forest fire warden under the revised statute.
- If the municipality is served by multiple fire departments or fire districts, designate one fire chief as the town forest fire warden for the municipality.
- Ensure FPR has current contact information for the town forest fire warden and any deputy town forest fire wardens designated by the fire chief.
- Ensure recordkeeping practices support wildfire reporting and reimbursement requirements.

The Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation will provide additional guidance, updated forms, and implementation resources in the coming months. We appreciate your assistance in helping Vermont communities remain prepared for wildfire prevention and response.

If you have questions regarding these changes, please contact FPR's Wildland Fire Program by email ANR.WildlandFire@Vermont.gov or the wildland fire staff for your area:

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