

KDA, Red Cross join forces to help victims of eastern Kentucky fires

Commodity foods may be made available to displaced families and individuals

FRANKFORT (November 17, 2016) — The Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) is prepared to work with the Red Cross to help people displaced by forest fires in eastern Kentucky.

“Citizens who are forced to flee their homes because of a forest fire or other natural disaster need shelter and food right away,” Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles said. “The KDA is there to help these victims get the nutrition they need.”

Under a Memorandum of Understanding, the KDA’s Division of Food Distribution collaborates with the Red Cross in Kentucky to support feeding of victims in shelters established by the Red Cross. The KDA and the Red Cross have asked schools in eastern Kentucky to be ready to prepare foods and use donated foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to feed fire victims.

USDA commodity food may be released when a disaster appears to be imminent, people are being evacuated, or congregate meal service is needed for a substantial number of dislocated families and individuals, and the Red Cross issues a request to the KDA.

Gov. Matt Bevin declared a statewide emergency on Nov. 3 in response to the wildfires, which have affected 23 counties in southeastern Kentucky. The Kentucky Division of Emergency Management reported that there have been 263 fires, with approximately 44,008 acres burned, as of Wednesday. The U.S. Forest Service has reported an additional 11 active fires covering approximately 920 acres of federal land. For the most recent information on the wildfire situation in Kentucky, go to kyem.ky.gov/KentuckyWildfires.

The Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet today warned that increased south to southwest winds forecast for Friday will combine with hot, dry conditions during the afternoon to produce an elevated risk for wildfires. The state Division of Forestry recommends no outdoor burning.

All of Kentucky is in severe drought except for some counties along the Ohio and Big Sandy rivers, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The National Weather Service forecast calls for showers in eastern Kentucky on Friday night and Saturday, followed by much cooler temperatures.