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By Kassia Micek Houston Community Newspapers

### Recent rain doesn't change threat of drought, wildfires

The rain that came down this weekend was a welcome sight, but officials warn it isn't even close to enough to change drought conditions or reduce fire threats.

In Conroe, the National Weather Service recorded 0.73 inch of rain since Saturday. Broken down, Conroe received 0.02 inch of rain Saturday afternoon, 0.03 inch Sunday morning and 0.68 inch early Monday morning.

"In the long-term scheme of things, this is literally a drop in the bucket," Fire Marshal Jimmy Williams said. "... Just because we get a little bit of rain, don't start burning."

The only upcoming chance of moisture seems to be a 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms Thursday, according to [www.srh.noaa.gov](http://www.srh.noaa.gov). However, even that is causing concern for local fire officials.

"What's really more concern is we're forecast to have a cold front with low humidity and high winds," Williams said.

That combination, which also occurred during the Riley Road Fire that affected the Magnolia area, could create new fires or create flare-ups of old fires. The Riley Road Fire, although it is 100 percent contained, continues to burn in the center. A drop in humidity and increase in winds could be the perfect storm for flare-ups.

Another thing to watch for with thunderstorms is a fire caused by a lightning strike, Williams said. "Those fires may not flare up for a day or two," he said. "The lightning strikes have been a problem all year."

Fires from lightning strikes are unusual in this area because there is usually too much moisture in the air, Williams said. That is not the case this year.

The burn ban continues throughout Montgomery County despite the rainfall as the area has not seem a "soaking rainfall" since October 2010, according to the Montgomery County Fire Marshal's website.

"Everybody should know there is a burn ban and that they should check to see if that's been lifted before they start to burn anything," Williams said.

However, it's going to take several consecutive days of steady rainfall to change conditions, he said.

The overall forecast calls for the current record drought to continue for sometime, possibly extending into 2012, according to a Montgomery County Fire Marshal press release. That's why Montgomery County fire officials, along with the Texas and U.S. Forest Services, will present safety information to residents during community town hall meetings this week.

The first meeting is from 6-8 p.m. Wednesday inside the auditorium at Montgomery High School, located at 22825 Texas 105 W. in Montgomery. Two meetings will be Thursday: 6 p.m. at the North Montgomery County Community Center, located at 600 Gerald St. in Willis; and 7 p.m. at Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints, located at 31706 Michael St. in Magnolia. Additional times and dates will be announced as more are scheduled.

The meetings will give residents a chance to learn how to prepare their property and help firefighters keep it safe from wildfire. Those who attend will learn what steps to take in preparation for evacuation and when to evacuate should a fire occur.

The presentations will include lessons learned from recent wildfires in Bastrop and Montgomery counties, as well as information from the “Ready, Set, Go” program, a nationally recognized wildfire safety initiative.