

Wind, dry conditions keep fire danger high

By Quintin Ellison

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GRAVEYARD FIELDS – Firefighters continued to monitor a wildfire Monday that burned 250 acres this past weekend at one of the region's most popular outdoor recreation areas.

About 25 firefighters remained on the scene Monday afternoon in Haywood County at Graveyard Fields near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Although the fire's cause remains under investigation, state and federal firefighters say it underscores the need for people to be cautious when burning debris.

"We have relatively warm temperatures, low humidity and winds – great for making fires," said N.C. Forest Service spokesman Paul Merten. "The forecasts are not calling for any rain."

The state has not forbidden open burning. Merten said the danger of wildfire in

SEE WILDFIRE SMOKE?

Call 911. County dispatchers will then call out the N.C. Forest Service.

Western North Carolina is moderate, typical for this time of year.

But the danger is fueled by wind gusts between 25 and 30 miles per hour, which is why the U.S. Forest Service was still mopping up the fire that started Saturday at Graveyard Fields.

"With these winds, we're not calling it contained yet," said Dispatch Coordinator Doug Francis.

The U.S. Forest Service also fought two, 15- to 20-acre sized fires Sunday night in Tennessee not far from Hot Springs. No new fires were reported on state or federal lands in WNC on Monday.

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