

HURRICANE MICHAEL'S WILDFIRE IMPLICATIONS

Hurricane Michael made landfall at Mexico Beach, Florida as a Category 4 hurricane on October 10, 2018. After hitting Mexico Beach, Hurricane Michael continued into Georgia as a Category 3 hurricane. Winds of 155 miles per hour left a path of destruction across a landscape primarily known for endless tree farms. A 'pickup stick' disaster of trees were left in the wake of the storm resulting in a fuel loading exceeding 20 times the normal fuel loading for this region of Florida and Georgia. Seventy-two million tons of trees between Florida and the Georgia border alone were downed by the storm.

The fuel loading created in Hurricane Michael's wake has left Florida unsure of the next steps and well aware of the high potential for dangerous fires. Firefighters should be aware of the issues that they may face on assignment to Florida and Georgia as no options exist to remove the trees coupled with the inability to use heavy equipment for line construction and the extreme risk to the wildland-urban interface.

"On April 4th a wildfire, caused by fire escaping from a burning debris pile, quickly grew and resulted in evacuations. Officials are worried that the fire could be the start to a particularly dangerous fire season for the state. "Even a normal fire season in the Panhandle could be catastrophic because of all the fuel," Florida Forest Service Director Jim Karels said Monday, according to the [Tampa Bay Times](#)."

For the full story on this wildfire click here: <https://www.tampabay.com/breaking-news/hurricane-michael-debris-fuels-500-acre-wildfire-in-florida-panhandle-20190401/>

The fuels on the ground currently mean that Florida will not face normal fire behavior or seasons, firefighters not familiar with these fuel types under normal conditions should use caution and obtain a full picture of fire potential and tactics before engaging.



Florida wildfire on April 4, 2019. Photo courtesy of wtxl.com