

Face Coverings Now Optional for Students and Staff at Anson Schools

The Anson County Board of Education approved to make face coverings optional for students and staff effective on Monday, March 7. District Administration has created the Anson County Schools Optional Face Coverings Plan with guidance from the Anson County Board of Education, NCDHHS, the CDC and our local Health Department. A hard copy of the plan was sent home on Friday, March 4 with each student.

The plan has been posted on the schools website (ansonschools.org) and all social media platforms.

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

When was your cooling system last serviced? Most manufacturers recommend an annual tune up for your home's cooling system. March is a great time to schedule this service so you can beat the summer rush when the pros are busiest.

A qualified professional can check the amount of refrigerant, accuracy of the thermostat, condition of belts and motors and other factors that can greatly impact the efficiency of your system.

source: energy.gov

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Spring Forward for Daylight Savings Time this Sunday

You may want to include plans to go to bed a little earlier this Saturday night because as of 2:00 a.m. Sunday, March 13, you will officially turn your clocks ahead and thus, lose an hour of sleep. Now don't be disappointed in a measly hour's sleep. Just think of all the wonderfully fun things you can do with an extra hour of daylight, which is, of course, the reason we change from EST to DST.

You could wash your car, wash your spouse's car, wash your dog and your cat, trim the hedge, mow the lawn, plant your garden, tend your flowers, till the land, clip the dandelions, pull the weeds or anything that needs attention around your personal space.

On the other hand, you could sleep an hour later (if you feel that strongly about the loss of one), take a leisurely walk, go to the park with your kids, walk the dog, sit in the shade of an old oak tree, sit in the sun and drink in vitamin D, take a nap in your hammock or outside easy chair, go on a picnic, sail on the lake, go fishing, have a cookout or whatever your heart desires. After all, we're springing forward into a new season. Spring is upon us and it's time to get out there and drink in the beauty of Anson County while grabbing the bull by the horns so to speak. Hey! There's another thought, be brave, be daring, maybe you're the sort to ride that bull instead! Whatever floats your boat you now have an extra hour of daytime to get it done. My advice, get out there and do it! *By Melanie Lyon in 2008*

Daylight Saving Time Brings Forth Important Reminder

Change your clock, change your battery

Daylight saving time begins this Sunday, March 13, and everyone is reminded to change the batteries in your household smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. It also is a good time to review home fire safety plans.

Smoke alarms cut the chances of dying in a fire in half, but they have to be in proper working condition in order to do their job. Everyone is urged to check your smoke alarm. This could be a potentially life-saving investment of time and energy.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), families have an average of three minutes to get out of their homes once their smoke alarm sounds due to fire. However, those life-saving minutes only occur when alarms are fully powered and operational.

There were 71 fire deaths reported across North Carolina in 2021, and in many of those incidents, a proper-working smoke alarm was not inside the home.

Changing your clock either back or forward should be like tying a string around your finger to remember to check your smoke alarm battery. The two practices need to go hand in hand.

The NFPA reports three out of every five home fire deaths across the nation resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.

Of those, in fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, more than half of them had missing or disconnected batteries after nuisance alarms, such as the alarm going off during cooking. Dead batteries caused one-quarter of the smoke alarm failures. Hardwired power source problems caused 7 percent of the failures. The rest of the failures occurred because of defective or improperly installed alarms.

In addition to changing or checking your smoke alarm battery, residents should take note of the following fire preparedness tips:

- Place a smoke alarm on every level of your home outside sleeping areas. If you keep bedroom doors shut, place a smoke alarm in each bedroom.
- Teach children what the smoke alarm sounds like and what to do when they hear it.
- Prepare and practice an escape plan – know at least two ways to get out of a room, crawl low under smoke and plan where to meet outside.
- Keep smoke alarms clean by regularly vacuuming over and around it. Dust and debris can interfere with its operation.
- Install smoke alarms away from windows, doors, or ducts that can interfere with their operation.
- Never remove the battery from or disable a smoke alarm. If your smoke alarm is sounding “nuisance alarms,” try locating it further from kitchens or bathrooms.

For more information on how to check smoke alarm batteries or have an alarm installed, contact your local fire department or the Office of the State Fire Marshal at 1.800.634.7854.

N.C. Forest Service Urges Residents to Exercise Caution When Burning Debris

With spring fire season upon us, the N.C. Forest Service is asking residents to prioritize safety and practice caution when burning debris. Escaped fires from burning debris continue to be the leading cause of wildfires in North Carolina. Peak months for the spring fire season run from March through May and fires left unattended can get out of hand quickly and become wildfires.

“Be sure to consider any and all factors when choosing to burn natural vegetation in your yard, especially on dry, windy days,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “Contact your local county ranger for tips on the safest way to burn and make sure you have a valid burn permit. You are the best defense against wildfires.”

Spring weather in North Carolina draws people outdoors to work in their yards and dispose of leaves and other yard debris by way of burning. For those who choose to burn, the N.C. Forest Service is offering the following tips:

- Consider alternatives to burning. Some types of debris, such as leaves, grass and stubble, may be of more value if they are not burned but used for mulch instead.
- Check local burning laws. Some communities allow burning only during specified hours. Others forbid it entirely.
- Make sure you have a valid permit. You can obtain a burn permit at any N.C. Forest Service office or authorized permitting agent, or online at: ncforestservice.gov/burn_permits/burn_permits_main.htm.
- Keep an eye on the weather. Don't burn on dry, windy days.
- Local fire officials can recommend a safe way to burn debris. Don't pile vegetation on the ground. Instead, place it in a cleared area and contain it in a screened receptacle away from overhead branches and wires.
- Household trash must be hauled away to a trash or recycling station. It is illegal to burn anything other than natural vegetation.
- Be sure you are fully prepared before burning. To control the fire, you will need a hose, bucket, steel rake and a shovel for tossing dirt on the fire. Keep a phone nearby, too.
- Never use kerosene, gasoline, diesel fuel or other flammable liquids to speed up debris burning.
- Stay with your fire until it is completely out.
- These same tips apply to campfires and grills as well. Douse burning charcoal briquettes or campfires thoroughly with water. Drown all embers, not just the red ones. When soaked, stir the coals and soak them again. Make sure everything is wet and that embers are cold to the touch. If you do not have water, mix enough dirt or sand with the embers to extinguish the fire, being careful not to bury the fire. Never dump hot ashes or coals into a wooded area.
- When burning agricultural residue and forestland litter: In addition to the rules above, a fire line should be plowed around the area to be burned. Large fields should be separated into small plots for burning one at a time. Prior to any burning in a wooded area, contact your NCFCS county ranger for technical advice on burning.

The public is reminded to keep drones away from wildfires. While drones provide unique opportunities for aerial video and imagery of wildfire activity, they are unauthorized. Flying a drone near or around a wildfire compromises the safety of N.C. Forest Service pilots and interferes with firefighting efforts. Individuals in violation of this law will be subject to civil penalties, fines and criminal prosecution. It's important to remember that if you fly, we can't.

To learn more about fire safety and preventing wildfires and loss of property, go to www.ncforestservice.gov. To learn more about the unauthorized use of drones, go to www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/uas/if-you-fly.

March 6 – 12 Designated as Women in Construction Week

Recognizing women across NC for their contributions in the construction industry

In honor of the many women who have contributed to the enhancement of our communities as well as improvements to the infrastructure of our state and economy, Governor Roy Cooper proclaimed March 6 – 12, 2022 as Women in Construction Week, recognizing women for their efforts in the construction industry. While construction continues to be a male-dominated field, women are breaking barriers, reducing the gender wage gap and establishing their own construction firms.

“Women in construction play a critical role in our state's success,” said Governor Cooper. “As we celebrate their accomplishments, we must continue the work to ensure that women in all fields have access to equal opportunities and pay.”

“Equal pay continues to be a growing disparity among women in most industries,” said NC Department of Administration Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell. “While we are not quite there, women have made commendable strides in terms of equal pay in the construction industry. My hopes are for more women, especially college-bound girls, to take interest in careers such as architecture and engineering, continuing to break down barriers and improve opportunities for women in male-dominated fields.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, estimates suggest women across the nation earn on average 81.1 percent of men's earnings for full-time wage and salary work. However, women in the construction industry earn an average of 99.1 percent when compared to men. In addition, in 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau reported more than 2,000 construction firms were owned by women, with an average of 15,470 employees.

While progress has been made, gender segregation continues to exist in the construction field. As noted in the 2018 Status of Women in NC: Employment and Earnings Report, reducing the disparity among women in male-dominated fields can be best resolved through advocacy and the promotion of paid internships, trainings, apprenticeships and recruitment of women in high-growth occupations such as construction. Doing so would help the current labor shortage and improve the economic outlook of North Carolina women and families across the state.

As the business manager for the state of North Carolina, the Department of Administration oversees the State Construction Office and Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses. For information on state construction projects, women employment and earnings in North Carolina, or to learn how you can do business with the state as a new construction firm, visit ncadmin.nc.gov for details.



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