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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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County Burn Ban Still in Effect Despite Recent Rainfall

Waco, Texas (October 13, 2011) -- The Waco-McLennan County Office of Emergency Management has received many phone calls on the current Burn Ban. OEM personnel want the public to be aware that although some areas of the county have received significantly more rain than others, a county-wide Burn Ban still remains in effect. For McLennan County, today's KBDI numbers – a significant factor in determining hazardous fire conditions – have actually increased slightly from yesterday, showing a high of 685 countywide.

KBDI (Keetch-Byram Drought Index) is an index used to determine forest fire potential. The drought index is based on a daily water balance, where a drought factor is balanced with precipitation and soil moisture (assumed to have a maximum storage capacity of 8-inches) and is expressed in hundredths of an inch of soil moisture depletion. Citizens can monitor the current KBDI by launching the KBDI interactive map at: <http://twc.tamu.edu/maps/kbdi>. Also, the Office of Emergency Management encourages residents to read and employ the "Outdoor Fire Safety Tips" at waco-texas.com/emergency-tips.asp.

The Burn Ban means that all outdoor fires in all areas of the county are illegal. Outdoor fires include fires in barrels, open grills, trash piles and barbecue pits. Grills and smokers that are fully covered and attended are excluded from the ban. The use of welding and cutting torches is also illegal unless the user has a 2A-20BC fire extinguisher, kept within 30 feet of any outdoor welding activity AND an individual to serve as a 'fire monitor' during all welding activities with the monitor remaining on scene for a minimum of 30 minutes after cessation of any outdoor welding activity.

The matter of the Burn Ban will be an item on the next Commissioners Court Agenda on Tuesday, October 18, 2011.

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