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Fire begins after discarded cigarette

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Editor

The field in front of Lumbee Hall caught fire Feb. 28 around 2 p.m. Campus police and local firefighters were on the scene to extinguish the fire.

According to campus police reports, the fire was started by a cigarette that was discarded outside.

Winds blowing up to 60 mph and the warm weather on Feb. 28 were prime reasons the fire spread so fast, according to a March 2 email from campus police Detective Edward Locklear.

“Due to the extremely dry conditions, students, faculty and staff are asked to please use smoking stations located throughout the campus community and to also take the time to ensure cigarettes are extinguished before discarding them,” the email stated.

Especially with the high probability of starting a grass fire or dropping it in pine straw, the dry weather can start a brush fire,” Charles Britt, Robeson County fire marshal, said.

According to the report, there were about several small fires on campus before a small brush fire was reported in front of Main Hall on Feb. 28. An officer responded to the fire.

UCNP student Ashley Pyron was walking on campus and was asked to give a tour for prospective students, when she witnessed the fire in front of Lumbee Hall.

“When I was turning in, I noticed smoke. But it was just a bit of white from what I saw when I drove closer, so I realized it had to have started from a cigarette. Well, with the wind blowing the way it was, it must have caught the ashes and hit the grass and as soon as that hit grass, it just started to burn. I was about to see her and I told her what was happening and to call the police. I was a shock in my view when I saw it because the flames and the wind were dancing together and having their own little unstoppable party,” Pryor said.

With the strong winds and dried out land, Robeson County has been experiencing numerous wildfires. “We were very lucky,” Chancellor Kyle Carter told the Faculty Senate at their March 2 meeting. “The winds were really whipping up.” He urged everyone to use caution. “We’re not out of the woods, yet, with fire danger and high winds.”

Robeson County did not have a burning ban, like most of the surrounding counties. Burning yard waste has also been a factor of the wildfires, according to the Robeson County Sheriff’s Office.

The Fayetteville Observer reported that a fire, which began Feb. 21, burned approximately 1,000 acres in Bladen County. There were no injuries or property damage during that fire.

“Anything smoky should be discarded in a proper manner,” Britt said.