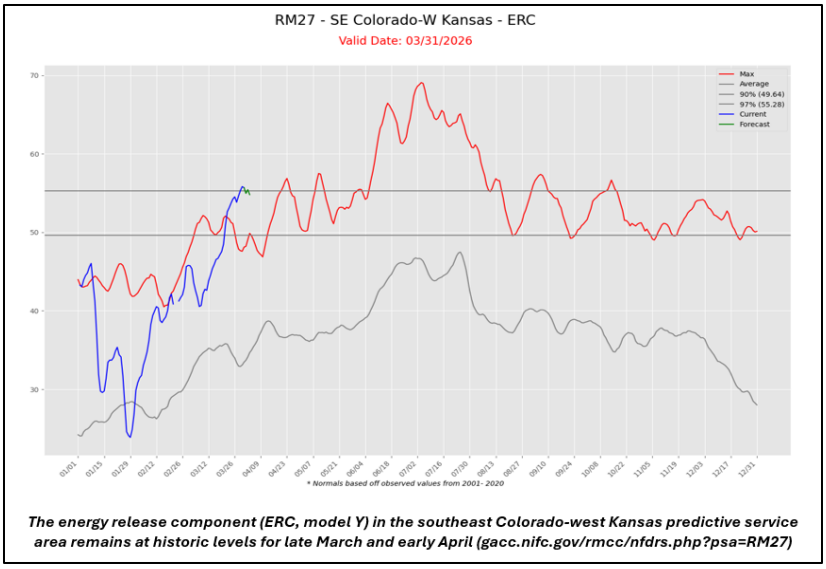
# Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

## *Central and Southern Great Plains*

*Date Advisory Effective – April 1, 2026*

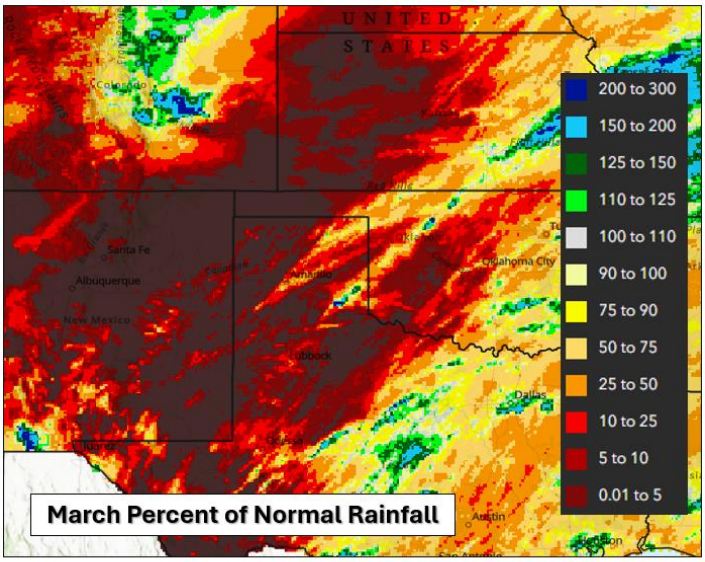
**Subject:** Above normal to exceptional grass loads remain widespread across the central and southern Great Plains. Until appreciable rainfall occurs, these dormant grasses will remain highly volatile when exposed to fire-effective weather conditions.

**Discussion:** Abundant, freeze-cured grasses dominate the landscape across the advisory area, while drought has continued to expand and intensify since late winter. Summer-like heat in mid- to late March resulted in accelerated drying of the landscape and historically high fire danger for this time of year, while sparse rainfall has limited green-up outside of irrigated agricultural lands. As storminess returns to the western United States during the first part of April, the potential for wind-driven wildfires will increase across the central and southern Great Plains.




*The energy release component (ERC, model Y) in the southeast Colorado-west Kansas predictive service area remains at historic levels for late March and early April (gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/nfdrs.php?psa=RM27)*

**Differences from Normal Conditions:** Well above normal rainfall during the 2025 growing season left widespread above normal to locally exceptional grass loading across the advisory area. While spotty rainfall and irrigated fields have led to areas of green-up, most of the landscape is dominated by freeze-cured grasses. A record warm winter has been followed by persistently warm and dry conditions, resulting in above normal fire occurrence. Fire intensity and resistance to control increased substantially in mid- to late March as dry weather continued and high temperatures surged into the 90s and 100s. This summer-like heat also propelled the energy release component (ERC-Y, see above) to historic levels for this time of year, with values as of late March still above the 97$^{th}$ percentile. Oklahoma Forestry Services reported extreme fire behavior and high resistance to control as a grassland fire spread to junipers on the Cedar Canyon Fire in late March, and similar conditions have been reported elsewhere in the region.




*Limited rainfall in March has maintained dormant grasses in the Plains.*

*Extreme fire behavior occurred on a grass fire that spread to junipers on Oklahoma's Cedar Canyon Fire (image from Oklahoma Forestry Services)*

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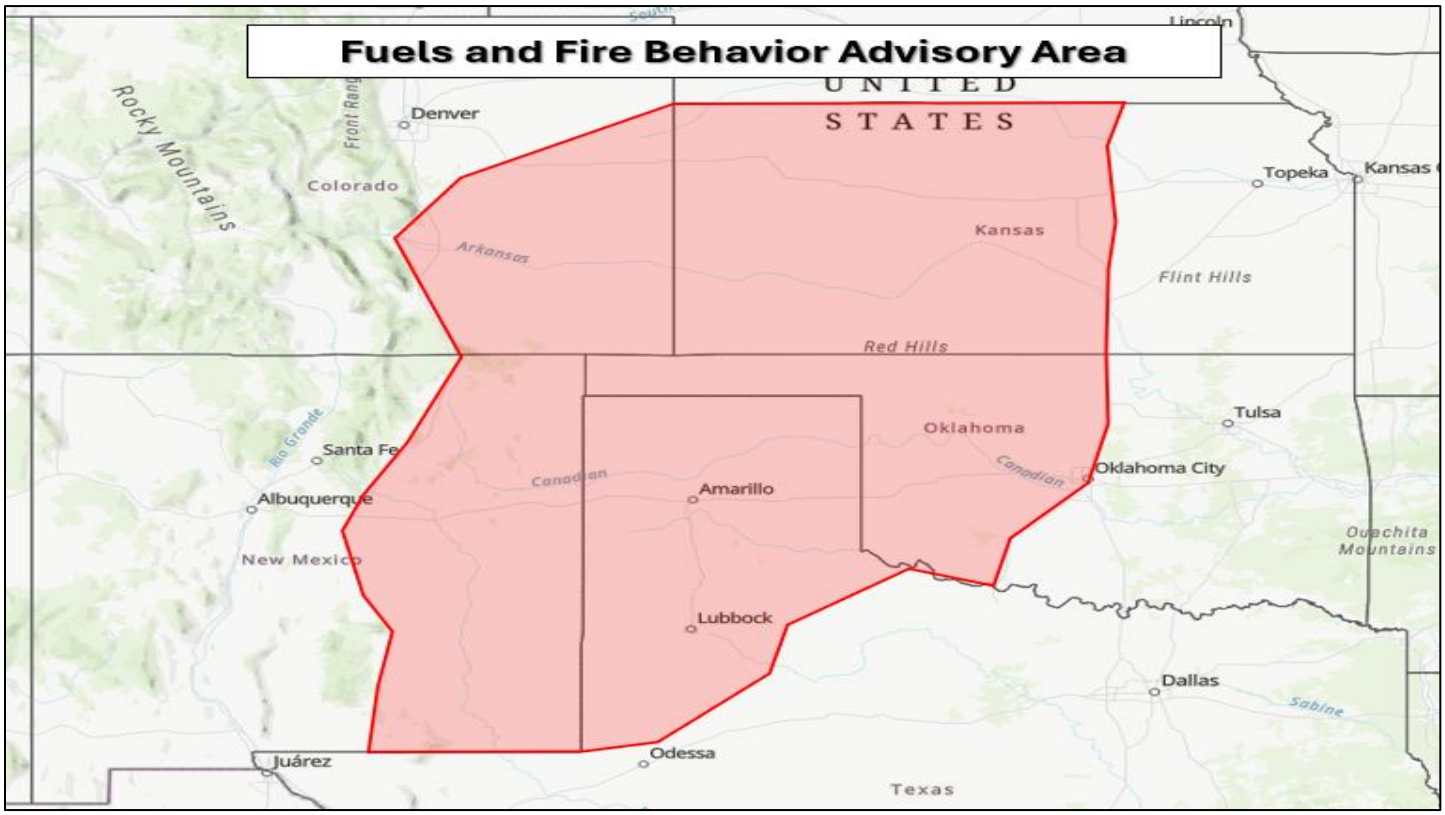
**Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:**

- The fire environment across the advisory area is primed for a continuation of above normal fire occurrence and fire intensity, especially during periods of elevated or higher fire weather. Rates of spread of 2-5 miles per hour have been observed in February and March in the advisory area.
- Critical fire weather patterns may occur with dry thunderstorm outbreaks, dryline passages, downslope wind events, dry cold fronts and dry return flow associated with quick warming trends.
- Fire spread will change dramatically with any increase in wind speed or change in direction. Firefighters should expect extreme rates of spread in fine fuels, along with increased fireline intensity on all portions of the fire. Frontal assault of wind driven fires should not be considered.
- Continuity of grass fuels may limit the potential for firebreaks, especially in canyons and other areas of complex terrain. Wheat fields that were greening up quickly earlier in March experienced some freeze damage during a brief cold snap, and hot temperatures later in the month also stressed new growth on some cool season species that would typically be used in limiting fire spread.
- The dry conditions and patterns of lower-than-normal mean humidity may increase burn periods and promote active burning during nighttime hours.
- Expect longer duration and more complex initial attack, along with an increasing occurrence of extended attack where dry weather prevails.
- The public should avoid areas in the vicinity of ongoing fires and heed evacuation notices if fires occur near their communities.

**Area of Concern:** The advisory area covers the grass-dominant landscapes of southeast Colorado, western and central Kansas, central and western Oklahoma, northwest Texas and eastern New Mexico.




**Issued By: The Southern Area Decision Support group in coordination with state and federal partners in the Southern, Southwest and Rocky Mountain Geographic Areas.**