



# NEWS RELEASE

## Lolo National Forest

United States  
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service  
Lolo National Forest  
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## Smokey Bear Hot Air Balloon to Visit Fort Missoula May 13

Missoula, MT. – As part of Wildfire Awareness Week -- an interagency program aimed at reducing the incidence of human-caused wildland fires -- fire prevention specialists will be hosting a day of fun educational activities at Fort Missoula May 13, to include the arrival of the Smokey Bear hot air balloon.

Fire Prevention Week and the Fort Missoula event – Wildfire Awareness Day -- is being organized by members of the Southwest Montana Fire Prevention Zone Committee and is cosponsored by the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula.

According to event organizers, Wildfire Awareness Day is a unique opportunity to have fun while also learning about important fire prevention measures and fire suppression missions.

“Smokey Bear's hot air balloon will arrive during Wildfire Awareness Week, a time when Montana launches a statewide campaign to raise awareness about wildfires,” said Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation spokesperson Jamie Kirby. “And what better way is there to launch a visible campaign than with a hot air balloon?”

Kirby noted that the Missoula area, and especially local children, will have the unique chance to see the Smokey Bear hot air balloon, visiting from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

“Not only will people get a chance to see the hot air balloon, but they can visit the multiple venues that will be located on site,” Kirby said. “Wildfire Awareness Day should provide hours of education and fun. Our thanks go out to the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula for hosting this special event.”

The event will include a wildland firefighter display to show the tools and equipment of a firefighter, a fire engine, Smokejumper display, tepee display hosted by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and other fire prevention and educational booths and events. The events will begin at 8 a.m., will run until 4 p.m., and be located adjacent to the Fort Missoula Historical Museum.

Human-caused wildfires each year result in large, destructive fires across western Montana. Fire managers stress that these fires can be prevented, saving property and money, if people understand some of the simple rules of fire prevention. For more information contact Jamie Kirby at (406) 542-4321, or Debbie Lepo at (406) 822-3925.

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