

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Eldorado National Forest

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Eldorado National Forest Fire Danger is Critical

Placerville, CA..... Labor Day visitors will determine if the Eldorado National Forest makes it through the weekend without a wildfire. The fire danger in the Eldorado National Forest is critically high says Bob Patton, Eldorado National Forest Fire Chief.

“The fire danger in the Forest is higher than it was when the 16,000 acre Power and 8,000 acre Freds fires started in 2004. It’s higher than 2001 when the 16,000 acre Star Fire started, and it’s higher than 1992 when the 24,500 acre Cleveland fire started,” said Patton. “To the tens of thousands of visitors we expect to come to the Forest this Labor Day weekend Smokey Bear’s message is dead on: “Only you can prevent forest fires.”

Campfires are the number one cause of human started wildfires in the national forest, says Patton. Forest Service fire restrictions currently prohibit any type of open campfires and charcoal barbeques outside “hosted” campgrounds. If a campground caretaker, called a host, is not residing in a campground then no campfires or barbeques are allowed.

Visitors choosing to build a campfire in violation of the fire restrictions will be faced with a large fine and the possibility of a mandatory appearance before a federal magistrate.

“I have been disappointed to find such a large number of people continuing to build campfires even though they have been prohibited since last June,” said Fire Prevention Specialist Barbara Rebiskie. “Many people are abiding by the rules but every weekend we find way too many people putting the Forest at risk with illegal campfires and barbeques. They are even abandoning their very hot illegal campfires. It only takes one.”

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Campers are still allowed to use propane stoves and lanterns if they have a permit and place the equipment in a safe spot. Rebiskie says that while campfires are not allowed, the California campfire permit allows propane lanterns and stoves to be used outside hosted campgrounds. The free-of-charge permits can be picked up at any Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management Office.

Smoking outside of a vehicle is also prohibited. Persons riding motorcycles and ATVs are required to have a functioning, approved spark arrestor on their muffler.

“The Forest is dry enough that a hot piece of carbon from an exhaust muffler can start a fire,” said Rebiskie. “Folks need to remember that it is still their responsibility to know the rules and regulations prior to camping and that they could be held responsible for any and all suppression costs created by their negligence.”

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