

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MISSOULA, Mt. - Fire season is here in the Northern Rockies and fire officials need everyone's help to prevent wildfires on public lands.

Tom Tidwell, Regional Forester for the Northern Region, said people should not be fooled by how green conditions appear on the ground.

"Fire danger levels in parts of southwestern Montana are already at very high and extreme levels," said Tidwell. We're seeing fires burning with the same intensity as we would normally see in August."

Hot temperatures and early snow melt throughout the Northern Rockies have dried forest and rangeland trees, grasses and shrubs much earlier than in typical years.

The numbers of wildland fires resulting from lightning and people are increasing and some of these early season fires, such as the Madison Arm Fire near West Yellowstone, are burning with an intensity that is more common to later in the summer.

With hot, dry weather expected for the Fourth of July holiday and possible record-breaking high temperatures predicted for later in the week, Tidwell urged people to be cautious no matter where they may be working and traveling across the Northern Rockies.

Travelers should check with local National Forest or other public land management agency offices for fire restrictions before they travel. Conditions can change rapidly, so it is important to keep in contact with local officials because new restrictions may come into effect with short notice.

Tidwell also reminded people that fireworks can be dangerous. Fireworks are prohibited on National Forests and most other public lands. Even where fireworks are legal, they should not be ignited around dry grass, brush or in other areas or conditions where a fire may start.

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For homeowners, now is a good time to inspect property to make sure that it is fire-safe in case it is threatened by wildfire. Brush should be cleared from around homes. Roofs and gutters should be inspected for debris and other flammable materials. For information on what you can do to make your property safer from wildfire, visit www.firewise.org or contact your local fire department.

For more information on fire prevention or to find out the current fire situation, please contact your local forest, land management, or fire department office. You can also log on to www.inciweb.org or the National Interagency Fire Center's website, www.nifc.gov.

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