

# NEWS RELEASE

## USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MISSOULA, Mt.,** - Thunderstorms coupled with record-breaking heat this weekend is a recipe for wildfires and the Forest Service is reminding the public to be extremely careful and cautious with using fire on public lands.

Weather forecasts show record breaking heat will continue to impact North Central Idaho, Northwest Montana and West Central Montana with temperatures predicted to reach 100 degrees for the next few days.

Fire managers are bracing for widespread lightning and thunderstorms that are expected for Friday afternoon through the weekend and possibly into next week. Strong gusty winds are also expected with these storms.



Rob Kaczmarek, meteorologist at the Northern Rockies Coordination Center in Missoula, Montana, says the last time the Missoula area received any measurable amount of rainfall was back on June 27, and we haven't seen a drop of rain since.

"Fuels are critically dry in West Central Montana, Central Idaho and Southwest Montana," said Kaczmarek. "This is the driest we've seen in 20 years."

Stage 1 and Stage 2 restrictions are in place on many national forests and grasslands within the Northern Region (northern Idaho, Montana, North Dakota and northwestern South Dakota) and people are encouraged to contact their local forest or grassland office for the latest on restrictions before they recreate.

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Here are some fire safety tips:

- Build small and contained campfires.
- Never leave fire unattended. Make sure it is DEAD OUT before leaving.
- State law requires having a bucket and shovel handy when lighting a campfire.
- All types of equipment and vehicles are required to have spark arresters. This includes; chainsaws, portable generators, cross-country vehicles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and farm equipment.
- Where smoking is permitted, have a 3-foot clearing around the smoker and fully extinguish cigarette or cigars prior to disposal in an appropriate container.

Fire officials say they've seen an increase in abandoned campfires this season, and anyone found negligent of starting a wildfire can be held financially responsible for damages and suppression costs.

For more information on fire activity and restrictions, contact your local forest, land management, or fire department office. You can also log on to [www.inciweb.org](http://www.inciweb.org) or the National Interagency Fire Center's website, [www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov).

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