



News from the Forest Service

Edited on: November 20, 2007

Happy Holidays



Christmas Trees



As many of you know by now, we were not able to offer a Christmas tree cutting area for this years Christmas season. Many people were disappointed and we apologize for this but we must follow the law. We are required by law to do some level of environmental analysis to determine impacts of specific activities on the environment. The last completed analysis was done and a

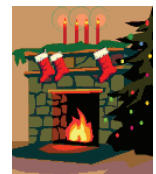
Decision Memo was signed by the District Ranger in 2002, this covered a period of 5 years. Since it expired this year the district revisited that decision to see if there were any conditions that had changed and there were:

- 1. Critical habitat for the Mexican spotted owl had not been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2002. In 2004 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mandated that we start identifying these areas.*
- 2. This year's Mexican spotted owl surveys in the cutting area resulted in the discovery of the presence of Mexican spotted owl individuals.*

In the mean time the Apache and Sitgreaves and Kaibab National Forests will be offering over-the-counter tree cutting permits. You may contact the Apache/Sitgreaves at 928-333-4301 or the Kaibab National Forest in Fredonia at 928-643-7395. We must complete surveys before any other activities are permitted. We are hoping to accomplish these in the summer of 2008 and possibly will then be able to assign a Christmas tree cutting area again. We will continue to keep you informed.

How to Clean a Chimney

It is that time of year again when most of us are using our wood heating stove or fireplace. Chimneys need periodic examination and thorough cleaning to maintain efficiency and to reduce the chance of a chimney fire. Below are some tips on the equipment you will need and process:



- Always wear eye protection and a dust mask, cover rugs, furniture and other items of concern within the work area.*
- Measure the chimney carefully to determine the correct brush size to select. You will also need a metal bucket, small shovel or broom, vacuum cleaner and a powerful flashlight.*
- Make sure that you close off the fireplace/wood stove and then work the brush up and down several times from the top of your chimney, always have a spotter when you use the ladder.*
- Sweep or vacuum up all residues prior to using the stove or fireplace. Be sure to check the debris behind the damper and smoke shelf area, in elbows or "T" connections. Hand held chimney cleaning brushes are available to reach hard-to-clean areas.*
- During the burning season there are products that you can purchase to help remove soot from your chimney, but remember nothing takes the place of actually cleaning your chimney. Be safe!*

How To Keep a Cut Christmas Tree Fresh



Here are some tips to keep your tree fresh:

1. Refresh the tree by making a straight cut, taking one inch off the butt and immediately place in water. This will improve water uptake.
2. Place the tree in a stand that can hold at least 1 gallon of water. You should expect the tree to take up additional water. Water the new tree until water uptake stops.
3. Always keep the base of a tree in water. If the base dries out, resin will form over the cut end and the tree will not be able to absorb water and will dry out quickly. You don't need anything other than regular tap water—drying out deters future water uptake and will need a new cut. Commercially prepared mixes like aspirin, sugar and other additives introduced into the water are not necessary. Research has shown that just plain old water will keep a tree fresh.
4. Check for worn Christmas tree light electrical cords and always unplug at night. Use UL approved electrical decorations and cords. Using miniature lights produce less heat and reduce the drying effect on the tree or any chance of fire.
5. Take down the tree before it dries out. Many fresh cut trees if properly cared for (using the first five steps) should last at least 5 weeks before drying out.

'Tis the Season for Prescribed Fires



We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for putting up with the smoke from the prescribed burns that the forest service conducts in the fall. The Mogollon Rim Ranger District has burned over 7,500 acres this fall, with approximately 2,000 acres left to do.

The smoke from the Mogollon Rim Ranger District and Black Mesa Ranger District greatly affected the Blue Ridge community, the community of Winslow and Heber and surrounding communities this year. Black Mesa Ranger District had a lightning caused fire that was put into "confinement strategy". This fire was the "Wilkins" fire and burned between Leonard Canyon and Willow Canyon on the northwest part of the Black Mesa Ranger District on the Apache/Sitgreaves National Forest. The fire was started by lightning on September 12, 2007 and fire managers decided to use this strategy. The containment lines used were Forest Road (FR) 115 on the west, FR 62 and FR 62A on the east, FR 225 on the south side, and the district boundary on the north side. That confinement area encompassed about 11,000 acres. The fire is still burning but only in stumps and big logs, the fire is now 7,760 acres.

Prescribed fire and fire use fires are two different methods the forest service uses to reduce the risks and consequences associated with wildland fire within the forest and the lands adjacent to it. Prescribed fire is intentionally ignited and confined to a certain area using containment lines as the perimeter. Fire use fire is a natural caused fire, started by lightning and is also managed with containment lines. Fire use fires and prescribed fires are becoming a very effective tool in managing national forest lands. By reducing ground fuels such as logs, branches and years of pine needle accumulation it will reduce the intensity of a wildfire that may occur. This will allow for possible quicker and easier control of a wildfire as well as improving firefighter safety.

Most forests are overstocked with too many trees and as the wood product industries continue to develop locally, other options will exist to remove hazardous fuels. We can not afford to thin every acre of the forest mechanically and there is no market at this time for most small diameter trees. We do not intend to kill all the trees when we burn but in areas where there is large accumulations of dead and down fuels small pockets of trees will torch and die. Reducing tree densities allows for remaining trees to grow with more vigor and be resistant to drought and bug infestations.

Unfortunately smoke is the downside to either prescribed fires, fire use fires or wildfires. We tend to do most of our burning in the fall when conditions are safer. The problem with burning in the fall is the temperature inversions settle the smoke overnight. Once again we thank you for your patience and if you have any questions please feel free to call Blue Ridge R.S. (928) 477-2255 or the Black Mesa R.D. (928) 535-4481.

Happy Holidays, Jean Gilbertson, Editor