

	Flathead National Forest	Media Release
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July 20, 2009

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Fires Suspected to be Arson- Forest Service Requesting Information

The Flathead National Forest is seeking information that will help in the investigation of several suspected arson fires ignited along the North Fork Road near the Big Creek Campground, approximately 15 miles north of Columbia Falls, on Wednesday, July 8, at about 5pm.

The fires starts north of Columbia Falls may be related to another fire start on the evening of July 8 located on private land south of Bigfork, near Chapmanhill Road.

Information regarding a dark blue sports utility vehicle (SUV), possibly a Ford Explorer with vanity plates, believed to be in the vicinity of both fire incidents is also being requested by Forest Service Investigators.

Anyone providing information can remain anonymous. A reward may be offered for information leading to arrest and conviction. Please contact Forest Service Law Enforcement at 758-5238 with any information related to these suspected arson fires.

Anyone convicted of willfully and without authority setting National Forest System lands on fire may be fined up to a \$250,000 and/or up to five years of jail time.

REMINDER: Fire danger in Northwest Montana is moderate and high based on current and anticipated weather conditions. The valleys and lower elevation areas are at high fire danger and the higher elevations are at moderate fire danger. Everyone is asked to be cautious with fire! When recreating with a campfire, always have a bucket and shovel nearby and put your campfire DEADOUT prior to leaving the site. Anyone operating equipment near forested areas are asked to use caution and have properly working spark arresters. Currently there are no fire restrictions in Northwest Montana, although open burning is prohibited.

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