

# FOREST FIRE RESTRICTIONS

## High Sierra Ranger District

### Sierra National Forest

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Each summer and fall California faces the threat of wild land fire on forests and grasslands. During especially hot and dry years, the situation is potentially disastrous. Fire-fighting techniques have improved greatly during the past 50 years, but preventing wild land fires is still our best defense against resource destruction and the loss of life. May through October is the usual period of high fire danger on the

Sierra National Forest. Exact dates vary from year to year depending upon weather conditions. This period is referred to as fire season.

Since the late 1930's, the Forest Service has regularly imposed some form of fire restrictions as an important part of the fire prevention program.

Objectives of wildfire prevention are to protect National Forest lands and resources from unnecessary loss by fire and to protect the public when conditions exist that would expose them to potential harm, over and above what is reasonable to expect in a forest environment. Objectives also are to permit maximum possible public use during these conditions.

Fire Restrictions and/or Emergency Closure is under authority of 36 CFR 261.50. Forest Supervisors and Regional Foresters have the authority to issue Fire Restrictions and/or Closures.

#### HAZARD AREAS:

Fire restrictions will be applied to parts of the Sierra National Forest at different times because lower elevations are hotter and drier than the higher elevations. Weather conditions, vegetation fuel types (grass, brush, timber), vegetation density (heavy or light), and terrain determine the hazards areas.

The Sierra National Forest is divided into 3 Fire Hazard Areas: HIGH, MODERATE, and LOW. Fire hazard areas sometimes include more than one fire danger rating area. Boundaries are readily identified on the ground by the fire danger rating area signs posted along all main roads within the Forest.

- The HIGH Hazard area generally includes the area from the National Forest boundary to 4,000 feet. This hazard area is comprised of fire danger rating areas 528 and 529.
- The MODERATE Hazard area generally includes the area of the Forest between 4,000 feet and 6,000 feet. This hazard area is the same as fire danger rating area 532.
- The LOW Hazard area generally includes the area of the Forest 6,000 feet up to the Wilderness boundaries. This hazard area is the same as fire danger rating area 533.

Due to the minimal potential for damaging fires or threat to public safety, the Wilderness areas on the Sierra National Forest are exempt.

#### ANNUAL FORE RESTRICTIONS

Annual fire restrictions for the Sierra National Forest remain in effect from May 1st and continue until the end of fire season are as follows:

1. Campfire permits are required for fires built outside designated forest campgrounds and picnic areas. Wilderness permits issued to visitors serves as a one time campfire permit.
2. A burning permit is required for all outside vegetation burning.
3. Smoking outside of vehicles, residences and other developed sites is permissible only while stopped in an area cleared of all flammable materials within 3 feet. Smoking while hiking, horseback riding, or while driving in an open vehicle is prohibited.



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Sierra  
National  
Forest

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## **ADDITIONAL FORE RESTRICTIONS:**

Additional fire restrictions are required when extreme fire danger is present. The following is a summary of the general prohibitions.

1. Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, charcoal, or stove fire, outside of designated recreation sites. The exception would be a portable stove using gas, jellied petroleum, or pressurized liquid fuel. 36 CFR 261.52(a). This makes campfire permits Invalid for these areas. Campfires are allowed only in designated sites.
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or at developed recreation sites. 36 CFR 261.52(d)
3. Operation of an internal combustion engine on a road, designated trail or by permit. 36 CFR 261.52(h). *Chainsaw use to cut firewood will be regulated by the woodcutting permit.*
4. Using or causing any explosives, except by Forest Service permit. 36 CFR 261.52(b)
5. Welding or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame, except by Forest Service permit. 36 CFR 261.52(i)

## **USE OF CHAINSAWS**

The Sierra National Forest will administer the use of chainsaws (woodcutting) with the Fire Danger Rating System and the fuel wood permit. When the adjective rating within any fire danger area reaches *very high* or *extreme*, chainsaw use will be prohibited in the area. The section in the restriction order that refers to internal combustion engines would not apply to people with a valid wood permit being used during the appropriate adjective level.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSURES**

Emergency Closure of a National Forest is a temporary order prohibiting entry to specific areas of the National Forest due to severe fire hazard and/or burning conditions. Closure is a measure that will be used as a last resort when there is no other option available to protect forest resources and provide for public safety. Special closure orders prohibit persons from going into or being within the area as defined within the Closure Order.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50(e) only following persons are exempt from closure orders:

1. Persons with a permit authorizing entry into the closed area.
2. Owners or lessees on land in the closed area.

3. Residents in the closed area.
4. Any Federal, State, or local officer in the performance of official duty.
5. Persons engaged in a business trade or occupation in the closed area.

## **DEFINITIONS:**

- Fires:
  - A. Campfire— a fire not within any building, mobile home, which is used for cooking, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes.
  - B. Charcoal fire— any fire in which the primary fuel is charcoal and can be contained within a barbecue, hibachi, or other container or fire pit.
  - C. Portable stove— any stove using gas, jellied petroleum or pressurized liquid fuel.
- Designated Site— includes developed campground, picnic area, and any location indicated by sign or marker showing approved fire use.
- Road— a road is a minimum of eight feet wide and can be traveled by a two or 4-wheel drive vehicle.
- Forest Development Trail— as defined in 36 CFR 212.1 (FSM 1023.4) those trails wholly or partially within or adjacent to and serving the National Forests and other areas administered by the Forest Service. A sign or marker indicates a trail.

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