

News Release

Susanville Interagency Fire Center

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection • Lassen National Forest
Bureau of Land Management • Lassen Volcanic National Park

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Agencies are Gearing up for Fire Season

While Memorial Day weekend traditionally marks the start of the summer season, the start of the wildfire season for federal land management agencies in Northeastern California comes a weekend earlier this year.

This year's wildfire season officially begins Sunday, May 19, according to staff at the Susanville Interagency Fire Center (SIFC), at which time the center goes to extended hours and increased staffing. The fire center has already been responding to wildfires.

"In reality, fire season began last week," said Richard Thayer, co-manager at SIFC, referring to the first week in May. "We're four to six weeks ahead in terms of dryness of fuels. There is potential for a little more severe fire season than what would be average because of the lack of precipitation this past winter."

In response to early fire activity, agencies are gearing up in kind, working to bring on resources at full strength by the first week in June, said Thayer. This means the opening of fire stations, the staffing of fire engines, and the positioning of fire-fighting aircraft that can respond anywhere in the more than nine million acres protected by SIFC.

The four-agency (Lassen National Forest, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Bureau of Land Management and Lassen Volcanic National Park) fire center will rely on about 30 fire engines, 18 hand crews, three water tenders and three helicopters. During significant fires, the center can summon firefighting resources from anywhere in the nation.

"Whether it's wood stoves, debris burning, camp fires, or cigarettes – just about anything can start a fire right now," said Thayer, who cautions the public to be very careful with the use of any kind of fire.

Permits for debris burning on private land have been required since May 1. Burning should only be done only on calm days and within the allowable burning hours. A shovel and hose should always be handy, and fires should be kept small and always be attended by an adult.

(MORE)

FIRE SEASON 2 2 2

If a burn escapes control, fire officials urge people to seek help immediately. Permissive burn day information is available from county air pollution control districts.

Permits are also required for campfires outside of developed campgrounds. They are available free at any office or fire station of the U .S. Forest Service, the BLM or CAL FIRE. Officials urge backcountry recreation visitors to follow basic fire safety rules. Campfires should be attended at all times and be dead-out before breaking camp.

Fire restrictions, such as limitations on campfires and off-highway vehicle use, could be put in place as fire danger increases.

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