



Flathead National Forest

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Media Release

July 18, 2013 UPDATE 7/23/13

Contact: Wade Muehlhof
406-758-5252

Public Asked to Heighten Fire Safety as Fuels Dry Out

Forest Service Law Enforcement Investigating Human-Caused Fire Starts

KALISPELL, MONT. – Fire danger on the Flathead National Forest and public lands in the Flathead valley is now at “high”. When the fire danger is "high", fires can start easily from most causes and small fuels (such as grasses and needles) will ignite readily. Unattended campfires and brush fires are likely to escape. Fires will spread easily, with some areas of high-intensity burning on slopes or concentrated fuels. Fires can become serious and difficult to control unless they are put out while they are still small.

The latest human-caused fire on the Flathead National Forest was detected Monday, July 22, 2013 in the Bob Marshall Wilderness at an area known as Independence Park. It appears the fire started from a campfire that was not properly extinguished. The fire is about one acre in size and resources are providing initial attack. There have already been more than a dozen human-caused fire starts on the Flathead National Forest. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers are investigating these fires. There are stiff fines and the possibility of jail time for being careless with your campfires, cigarettes and other ignition sources.

Human-caused wildfires can have devastating impacts unnecessarily destroying our natural resources, putting the public and our firefighters in danger, destroying homes and habitat, and costing taxpayers millions every year. Nation-wide, more than 75,000 wildfires are reported each year. About nine out of ten fires are caused by people. July 23, 2103 marks the 10 year anniversary of the start of a human caused fire named the Robert Fire in the North Fork area. The fire burned 57,570 acres of National Forest and National Park land. The fire cost taxpayers nearly 31 million dollars. As Smokey Bear reminds us, only you can prevent this from happening.

We ask that all forest users be extra careful to fully extinguish any campfire or cooking fire.

- 1) Never leave a campfire unattended, and be sure it is “dead out” before leaving the area.
- 2) Have a bucket and shovel handy when having a campfire.
- 3) Cigarette smokers should smoke on bare ground or soil (not in or near vegetation) and pack out their cigarette butts.
- 4) Fireworks are prohibited in all national forests, national parks, state lands, and all private land the state identifies as classified forest land.

For more information about wildland fire education and prevention, please visit http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/prev_ed/ or contact a local office of the Flathead National Forest.

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| Hungry Horse Ranger District | 387-3800 |
| Swan Lake Ranger District | 837-7500 |
| Tally Lake Ranger District | 758-5204 |
| Spotted Bear Ranger District | 758-5376 |

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